

## Où en sont les études sur le Siracide?

Lors des Journées Bibliques de Louvain en 1972, une discussion publique s'engagea entre H.D. Preuss et J. Lévêque sur la conclusion du courant sapientiel de l'Ancien Testament. Pour Preuss, qui s'en tenait à la Bible hébraïque, la sagesse biblique s'achevait avec Qohélet sur un échec et mat! Position extrême à laquelle s'opposa Lévêque, car, si l'on exclut le Siracide et la Sagesse de Salomon, comment expliquer la résurgence de ce courant sapientiel dans le Nouveau Testament, en particulier dans les Évangiles synoptiques?<sup>1</sup>

Depuis un peu plus de vingt ans, longtemps après ce colloque de Louvain, la découverte de textes sapientiaux dans les manuscrits de Qumrân conduisait à refuser la thèse de Preuss: en Israël, le courant sapientiel ne s'était donc pas achevé sur un échec et mat<sup>2</sup>. Quant à la Sagesse du Siracide, elle est bien juive elle aussi, mais, à la différence des textes qumrâniens, elle a traversé les siècles.

On pourrait, certes, penser que cette œuvre attribuée à Ben Sira aura déjà dévoilé tous ses secrets. Il n'en est rien. Jusqu'en 1896, les commentateurs allaient tranquillement leur petit bonhomme de chemin. Ils expliquaient la version grecque la plus courante, celle des grands manuscrits onciaux, réalisée, selon le Prologue classique du livre, par le petit-fils de l'auteur; cependant rares étaient les commentaires vraiment scientifiques, le meilleur étant celui de O.F. Fritzsche de 1859<sup>3</sup>. Dans le monde occidental, on utilisait la version latine sixto-clémentine de la Vulgate et le livre s'appelait l'Ecclésiastique. En 1873, A.M. Ceriani avait édité la version syro-hexaplaire du Siracide et en 1884 la version syriaque *Peshitta*<sup>4</sup>. On savait pourtant que l'auteur original, Ben

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. GILBERT, "Journées bibliques de Louvain (23-25 août 1972", *RTL* 3 (1972) 496-500, spéc. 499-500.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M.J. GOFF, *Discerning Wisdom. The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (VTS 116; Leiden - Boston 2007).

<sup>3</sup> O.F. FRITZSCHE, *Die Weisheit Jesus-Sirach's* (Kurtzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen 5; Leipzig 1859) XL-415 p.

<sup>4</sup> A.M. CERIANI (ed.), *Codex Syro-Hexaplaris Ambrosianus photolitho-*

Sira, avait rédigé son œuvre en hébreu, mais, de celle-ci, on ne connaissait que quelques citations transmises par les traditions rabbiniques<sup>5</sup>. La révolution critique allait passer par là et elle est encore loin d'avoir produit tous ses effets, tiré toutes les conséquences de la découverte de 1896.

Le 13 mai 1896, en effet, S. Schechter identifiait le texte hébreu de Si 39,15b–40,8 sur deux feuilles de papier médiéval que les soeurs jumelles A. Smit Lewis et M. Dunlop Gibson venaient de rapporter du Proche-Orient. La découverte fit sensation et en provoqua d'autres à Cambridge, à Oxford, à Londres, à New York et à Paris. En 1900, on avait ainsi récupéré environ les deux-tiers du texte hébreu de Ben Sira. Par la suite et jusqu'aux premiers mois de 2011<sup>6</sup>, d'autres fragments hébreux de Ben Sira furent découverts. Ils provenaient en fait de la genizah de la synagogue caraïte du Vieux Caire et on les date du X<sup>e</sup> ou du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle. En 1962 et 1965, on en publia d'autres, trouvés à Qumrân et à Masada. Ceux-ci dataient du I<sup>er</sup> siècle avant notre ère: ils étaient donc proches de l'original et leur similitude avec les fragments du Caire prouvait définitivement qu'on possédait désormais des copies authentiques du texte hébreu de Ben Sira, perdu depuis le IV<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>7</sup>. Désormais toute étude de la Sagesse de Ben Sira devrait en tenir compte.

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*graphice editus* (Monumenta Sacra et Profana 7; Milano 1874) 80-96; *Translatio Syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI photolithographice edita*, t. II (Milano 1883) 458-485.

<sup>5</sup> S. SCHECHTER, "The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature", *JQR* 3 (1891) 682-706.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J.-S. REY, "Un nouveau bifeuillet du manuscrit C de la Genizah du Caire", *Florilegium Lovaniense. Studies in Septuagint and Textual Criticism*. Festschrift F. García Martínez (eds. H. AUSLOOS – B. LEMMELIJN – M. VERVENNE) (BETL 224; Leuven 2008) 387-416. Sh. ELIZUR, "Two New Leaves of the Hebrew Version of Ben Sira", *DSD* 17 (2010) 13-29; M.C. PALMISANO, "Sulla recente scoperta di due nuovi fogli ebraici del ms C del libro del Siracide", *Bogoslovni vestnik* (Ljubljana) 70 (2010) 517-529. En janvier 2011, on annonça qu'une feuille du manuscrit D contenant Si 7,18–8,18 venait d'être découverte. Il peut être visionnée sur le site internet: <http://www.bibbiablog.com/2011/01/22/a-new-fragment-of-the-book-of-ben-sira-t-s-as-118-78/>.

<sup>7</sup> Jérôme prétend en avoir vu une copie: cf. son introduction aux *Libri Salomonis id est Proverbia Ecclesiastes Canticum Canticorum* (Biblia Sacra iuxta latinam vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidem; Rome 1957) 4.

Une première série de travaux scientifiques parut entre 1898 et 1913. La Grande Guerre arrêta cette envolée, toujours indispensable, avec les éditions et commentaires d'I. Lévi<sup>8</sup>, de N. Peters<sup>9</sup> et de R. Smend<sup>10</sup>. Il fallut attendre les découvertes de Qumrân et surtout de Massada pour que la recherche reprenne de plus belle. Elle est cependant loin d'être terminée.

Dans ces pages, on présentera trois sortes de questions concernant cette Sagesse de Ben Sira et qui font toujours débat: 1. les problèmes textuels; 2. les problèmes littéraires; 3. les problèmes théologiques.

### I. Les problèmes textuels

Toute exégèse sérieuse doit s'appuyer sur un bon texte, de préférence avec un regard critique sur les témoins anciens et authentiques. Cette exigence vaut aussi pour la Sagesse de Ben Sira, mais, dans ce cas, les choses se compliquent sérieusement. En effet, l'exégète se trouve devant quatre traditions textuelles antiques: les copies fragmentaires de l'original hébreu, deux versions grecques, l'une venant des grands manuscrits onciaux Sinaiticus, Vaticanus et Alexandrinus, et l'autre, principalement de quelques manuscrits écrits en minuscules, une version latine avec une histoire compliquée et, pour faire simple, la version syriaque *Peshitta*. Chacune de ces traditions donne un texte souvent différent. Il convient donc de signaler à quelle tradition textuelle on se réfère.

Faut-il cependant faire un choix parmi ces traditions textuelles? En pratique, on a tendance aujourd'hui à privilégier le texte hébreu, pour autant qu'on en ait un témoin textuel. Mais cela aussi

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<sup>8</sup> I. LÉVI, *L'Ecclésiastique ou la Sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira*. Texte original hébreu édité, traduit et commenté (BEHE.R 10,1-2; Paris 1898, 1901) I-II; ID., *The Hebrew Text of Ecclesiasticus* (SSS 3; Leiden 1951).

<sup>9</sup> N. PETERS, *Der jüngst Wiederaufgefundene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus* untersucht, herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit kritischen Noten versehen (Freiburg im Breisgau 1902); ID., *Liber Iesu Filii Sirach sive Ecclesiasticus Hebraice* (Friburgi Brisgoviae 1905); ID., *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus* (EHAT 25; Münster 1913).

<sup>10</sup> R. SMEND, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin 1906); ID., *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach hebräisch und deutsch* (Berlin 1906).

présente des problèmes, puisque le texte hébreu de Ben Sira n'a pas été transmis régulièrement comme le furent les versions grecque, latine et syriaque: nous n'en possédons que des fragments retrouvés.

Toutefois, les études critiques menées durant le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ont établi que l'œuvre de Ben Sira, datant du premier quart du II<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère et traduite en grec à partir de 132 avant notre ère par celui qui se prétend son petit-fils, avait subi par la suite une révision avec modifications et ajouts. Pour être clair, on parle alors d'un Hb I, l'œuvre même de Ben Sira, d'un Gr I, la version grecque de son petit-fils, d'un Hb II, dont des fragments hébreux donnent quelques témoignages, et d'un Gr II, le texte grec revu et augmenté, transmis surtout par quelques manuscrits écrits en minuscules et dont les versions latines et syriaques témoignent également.

Ceci dit, voici quelques données fondamentales sur chacune des quatre traditions textuelles.

### 1. *Les textes hébreux*

Mis tous ensemble, ils ne donnent guère plus que les deux-tiers du livre. Manquent Si 1-2 et 17-29. Le texte important de Si 24 fait donc encore défaut. L'avenir apportera-t-il de nouvelles découvertes? Ce n'est pas exclu et on peut même l'espérer, car, à ce jour, tous les fonds qui peuvent en cacher n'ont pas été totalement inventoriés.

D'autre part, les manuscrits retrouvés sont en mauvais état. Des bas de pages manquent parfois; dans d'autres cas, il ne reste que des bouts de ligne, suffisants tout de même pour assurer une identification; des lignes incomplètes ou des trous dans le papier empêchent une lecture assurée. En outre, s'agissant de textes à usage courant, leur transcription n'est pas très soignée, hormis pour le manuscrit B. Comme on possède six manuscrits différents provenant du Caire, trois de Qumrân et un de Massada, il est possible et nécessaire de comparer les textes lorsqu'ils paraissent dans deux, voire dans trois manuscrits différents. A. Minissale a suivi cette méthode pour dix péricopes<sup>11</sup>. Dans le cas de diver-

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<sup>11</sup> A. MINISSALE, *La versione greca del Siracide. Confronto con il testo*



gences entre manuscrits, les options textuelles doivent être justifiées de façon critique, même si, quoi qu'on fasse, les options demeurent de l'ordre de la probabilité, sans plus.

Par contre, quand on ne possède qu'un manuscrit fournissant tel texte, il faut, en bonne critique, tenir compte de la cohérence du texte et, dans une certaine mesure, des versions antiques, tout en sachant qu'elles ont leur propre cohérence. Mais enfin, quand elles sont unanimes à proposer une leçon, l'argumentation gagne du poids.

On ne s'étonnera donc pas de voir que, contrairement aux éditions manuelles du début du siècle dernier, les deux éditions récentes des textes hébreux de Ben Sira se contentent de fournir le matériel offert par chaque manuscrit, sans chercher à établir une édition critique en bonne et due forme<sup>12</sup>. Parviendra-t-on un jour à établir une telle édition? En tout cas, c'est trop tôt pour le faire, tant qu'on n'aura pas fait le tour approfondi du livre et de tous ces fragments.

## 2. *Les textes grecs*

Tous les manuscrits grecs du Siracide, aussi bien ceux qui sont écrits en onciales qu'en minuscules, ont interverti Si 30,25–33,16a et 33,16b–36,13a, soit deux cahiers d'un codex. Les manuscrits hébreux, ainsi que les versions latine et syriaque, le prouvent. Or, la version latine traduit un texte grec! Ce qui revient à dire que tous les manuscrits grecs connus dépendent d'un archétype postérieur à la version latine, celle-ci ayant été faite avant la fin du II<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne.

L'édition critique de la version grecque réalisée par J. Ziegler<sup>13</sup> en 1965 supprime désormais celles de Swete et de Rahlfs. Ziegler

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ebraico alla luce dell'attività midrascica e del metodo targumico (AnBib 133; Roma 1995) 33-149.

<sup>12</sup> Z. BEN-HAYIM, *The Book of Ben Sira. Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary* (Jerusalem 1973); P.C. BEENTJES, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts & A Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTS 68; Leiden 1997); ID., "Errata et corrigenda", *Ben Sira's God* (ed. R. EGGER-WENZEL) (BZAW 321; Berlin – New York 2002) 375-377.

<sup>13</sup> J. ZIEGLER, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum XII/2; Göttingen 1980).

a rétabli l'ordre original des chapitres et versets; il faut donc abandonner la numérotation des versets inventée par Rahlfs: elle a créé une confusion supplémentaire. Par ailleurs l'édition de Ziegler a mis, en leur place normale, 135 stiques provenant de manuscrits écrits en minuscules (Gr II): ils sont imprimés en caractères plus petits, par exemple en Si 1,5.7. L'apparat critique est le plus développé qu'on puisse espérer. On notera cependant qu'il arrive à Ziegler de corriger le texte des manuscrits grecs sur la base de l'hébreu, par exemple en Si 51,6a: sur ce point, il convient d'être très prudent.

En effet, la version grecque Gr I a sa propre cohérence et doit s'étudier pour elle-même, indépendamment de l'original hébreu. C'est ce que vient de faire R. De Zan pour Si 34,21–35,20<sup>14</sup>. De son côté, A. Minissale a montré par des comparaisons multiples que le traducteur grec, non seulement adapte à son époque le texte hébreu, par exemple en Si 50,23–24, mais surtout que sa méthode se ressent du midrash et du targum<sup>15</sup>.

Quant aux 135 stiques additionnels, ils proviennent de différents manuscrits écrits en minuscules (Gr II). Le principal est le ms. 248, de la Bibliothèque Vaticane. Il a été édité, annoté et comparé à la version syro-hexaplaire par J.H.A. Hart en 1909<sup>16</sup>. Mais, dans son édition critique des *Sacra Parallela* du Siracide, O. Wahl<sup>17</sup> y a découvert en 1974 une dizaine de versets grecs additionnels qui n'étaient connus jusqu'à présent qu'en latin. Quant à l'origine de tous ces ajouts de Gr II, S. Bussino<sup>18</sup> vient de montrer que la majorité d'entre eux traduit un substrat hébreu — ce qu'on supposait déjà — mais aussi que le vocabulaire de ces ajouts diffère de celui du traducteur de Gr I. Reste que la totalité de ces ajouts n'est pas transmise par tous les manuscrits écrits en minuscules, chacun de ceux-ci n'en retenant qu'un certain nombre: pour-

<sup>14</sup> R. DE ZAN, *Il culto che Dio gradisce*. Studio del "Trattato sulle offerte" di Sir<sup>Gr</sup> 34,21–35,20 (AnBib 190; Roma 2011).

<sup>15</sup> MINISSALE, *La versione greca del Siracide*, 151–258.

<sup>16</sup> J.H.A. HART, *Ecclesiasticus*. The Greek Text of Codex 248 (Cambridge 1909).

<sup>17</sup> O. WAHL, *Der Sirach-Text der Sacra Parallela* (FzB 16; Würzburg 1974).

<sup>18</sup> S. BUSSINO, *Le aggiunte in greco nel libro di Ben Sira*, thèse présentée à l'Institut Biblique Pontifical en mars 2011, édition en préparation.

quoi cette liberté des copistes à transmettre tel ajout et pas tel autre? La réponse manque encore.

### 3. *Les textes latins*

La version latine de l'Ecclésiastique a donc été établie sur une version Gr II que nous n'avons plus. Dans son apparat critique du texte grec devenu traditionnel, Ziegler a indiqué les nombreuses fois où la version latine se distingue de cette version grecque pour s'aligner sur une tradition textuelle que l'on retrouve en hébreu. Il y a là, certes, un problème sérieux, qui n'a pas encore été affronté pour lui-même. La version grecque perdue était-elle plus fidèle à l'hébreu que celle qui nous parvient?

L'histoire de la version latine est compliquée. Un texte Gr II fut traduit par un chrétien avant la fin du II<sup>e</sup> siècle. W. Thiele en a donné une édition critique pour Si Prologue et 1-24<sup>19</sup>. C'est la *Vetus Latina* (VL). Jérôme ayant refusé de retraduire en latin la version grecque du Siracide, la version VL entra dans la Vulgate (Vg), peut-être déjà avant la fin du V<sup>e</sup> siècle. C'est le texte qui figurait dans la Bible sixto-clémentine. En 1964, les Bénédictins de l'Abbaye Saint-Jérôme, à Rome, donnèrent une édition critique du texte de l'Ecclésiastique tel qu'il était lors de son insertion dans la Vulgate<sup>20</sup>. En effet, cette version de l'Ecclésiastique comporte des retraductions tardives de certains versets à partir de la version grecque, par exemple en Eccli 1,11-13, doublet de Eccli 1,17-18Vg.

Pourtant, cette version VL-Vg est considérée comme le meilleur témoin, indirect, certes, de ce Gr II perdu, car, en plus des stiques additionnels, elle montre que Gr II procéda aussi à des modifications significatives dans nombre de versets, ce qui n'apparaît pas dans les manuscrits qui transmettent Gr II. On peut même montrer que des additions propres à la VL-Vg supposent, par-delà Gr II, un substrat d'origine juive, et non pas chrétien<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> W. THIELE (ed.), *Sirach Ecclesiasticus* (Vetus Latina 11/2; Freiburg 1987-2005).

<sup>20</sup> *Sapientia Salomonis*. Liber Hiesu filii Sirach (Biblia sacra iuxta latinam Vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidei XII; Città del Vaticano 1964).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. GILBERT, "Les additions grecques et latines à Sir 24", *Lectures et relectures de la Bible*. Festschrift P.-M. Bogaert (éds. J.M. AUWERS - A. WÉNIN) (BETL 144; Leuven 1999) 195-207, spéc. 201-207. Pour l'Ecclé-

#### 4. Les textes syriaques

La version syro-hexaplaire du Siracide date probablement du V<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle traduit en syriaque la version grecque qu'Origène avait donnée dans ses *Hexaples*, un texte Gr II.

La version syriaque la plus importante est celle de la *Peshitta*. On n'en possède pas encore d'édition critique<sup>22</sup>. Cette version semble bien d'origine chrétienne et pourrait dater des années 300. Elle traduit un texte hébreu, Hb II. Parmi les additions qu'elle seule transmet, on retiendra surtout Si 1,20c-z, dont l'origine a toute chance d'être hébraïque. Il semble aussi que le traducteur adapte sa traduction à son public, omettant des passages qui ne l'intéressent pas directement: ainsi la prière de Si 51,1-12 est plus générale que l'original hébreu. Cette version est donc un témoin important de Gr II, mais pas toujours fiable au plan textuel.

#### 5. Conséquences

Quand on cite l'œuvre de Ben Sira, il conviendrait d'indiquer à laquelle de quatre traditions textuelles on se réfère et indiquer également la numérotation des chapitres et versets propre à la tradition choisie. En particulier, lorsqu'on cite la version grecque, Gr I ou Gr II, il conviendrait de signaler le numéro du chapitre tel qu'il apparaît dans cette version, en ajoutant entre parenthèses, pour les chapitres 30–36, le numéro du chapitre tel qu'on le

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siastique, la *Néo-Vulgate*, éditée en 1979 par ordre de Jean-Paul II, est un texte latin hybride. Il corrige les fautes évidentes, intègre les versets additionnels trouvés en hébreu, en grec et en latin, – pas en syriaque (cf. Si 1,20c-z syriaque, remplaçant Si 1,22-27). C'est que ce texte *Néo-Vulgate* n'a pas de prétention critique: il fournit un texte à utiliser dans la liturgie de l'Église latine. Une édition préparatoire en fascicule indiquait dans la préface et en notes les données critiques essentielles, justifiant les choix opérés: Pontificia Commissio Pro Nova Vulgata, *Liber Ecclesiasticus*, *Liber Deuteronomii*, *Liber Ruth*, Pro manuscripto (Romae 1976) 7-98; *Libri Sapientiales* (Romae 1977) 5-7, 183-275. Ainsi, pour Eccli 45,7-27, "Pericope de Aaron fere ad textum Hebraicum accommodata est", dans l'édition de 1976, 86, note; dans celle de 1977, 263, note.

<sup>22</sup> En attendant, on utilisera la réédition du texte du codex ambrosien, avec traductions anglaise et espagnole, réalisée par N. CALDUCH-BENAGES – J. LIESEN – J. FERRER, *La Sabiduría del Escriba – Wisdom of the Scribe* (BM 26; Estella [Navarra] 2003).

restituée à la lumière des autres traditions textuelles; pour la numérotation des versets, on suivra l'édition critique de Ziegler; c'est la seule façon d'éviter les confusions, encore trop fréquentes. Les numérotations de l'édition de Rahlfs sont à proscrire.

Mais quelle tradition choisir? J'expliquerai plus avant pourquoi la liberté doit être maintenue. Reste qu'une tendance actuelle, non généralisée pourtant, donne la priorité au texte hébreu, malgré son état fragmentaire et parfois diversifié selon les manuscrits<sup>23</sup>. Dans ce cas, il faudra donc procéder à un travail ardu de critique textuelle.

En fait, derrière le choix à opérer, il faut tenir compte, me semble-t-il, du principe de cohérence de chaque tradition; il me paraît préférable de ne pas homogénéiser les traditions: le message de Ben Sira n'est pas exactement celui de ses traducteurs ni non plus celui de ses réviseurs.

## II. Problèmes littéraires

### 1. *Ben Sira et Qumrân*

Parmi les problèmes littéraires qui préoccupent actuellement les chercheurs, les rapports entre Ben Sira et Qumrân tiennent une place de choix. En particulier, les questions linguistiques ont fait l'objet de quatre symposiums successifs<sup>24</sup>. Plusieurs caractéris-

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<sup>23</sup> Parmi les commentaires récents, privilégient le texte hébreu: P.W. SKEHAN – A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York 1987); G. SAUER, *Jesus Sirach / Ben Sira* (ATD.Apok. 1; Göttingen 2000); J. SCHREINER, *Jesus Sirach 1–24* (NEB.AT 38; Würzburg 2002); Ch. MOPSIK, *La Sagesse de Ben Sira* (Les Dix Paroles; Lagrasse 2003); B.M. ZAPFF, *Jesus Sirach 25–51* (NEB.AT 39; Würzburg 2010). Par contre, J. MARBÖCK, *Jesus Sirach 1–23* (HThK.AT; Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2010), traduit le texte grec, quitte à renvoyer en notes aux textes hébreux.

<sup>24</sup> T. MURAOKA – J.F. ELWOLDE (eds.), *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*. Proceedings of a Symposium held at Leiden University 11–14 December 1995 (StTDJ 26; Leiden – New York – Köln 1997); IDEM (eds.), *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*. Proceedings of a Second International Symposium held at Leiden University [1997] (STtDJ 33; Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999); IDEM (eds.), *Diggers at the Well*. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium held at Leiden University [1999] (StTDJ 36; Leiden – Boston – Köln 2000); J. JOOSTEN – J.-S. REY (eds.), *Conservatism and Inno-*

tiques de l'hébreu de Ben Sira, intermédiaire entre l'hébreu biblique et l'hébreu mishnaïque, sont analysées, en particulier sa syntaxe.

D'autre part, J.-S. Rey a procédé à une comparaison de quelques thèmes communs au texte sapientiel *4QInstruction*, texte essénien, non pas qumrânien, et à la Sagesse de Ben Sira<sup>25</sup>. Ils sont contemporains et pourtant très différents. L'*Instruction* s'adresse à des pauvres mais cultivés, les membres de la communauté essénienne; Ben Sira, lui, s'adresse à des gens riches. L'*Instruction* montre que l'espérance eschatologique, le salut fondé sur un jugement éthique, est l'aboutissement de leur quête de la sagesse, tandis que Ben Sira en reste au bonheur terrestre. On peut s'attendre à ce que des travaux comparatifs de ce genre se multiplient à l'avenir<sup>26</sup>.

## 2. La structure du livre

Il y a un problème qui intrigue depuis longtemps les lecteurs, les traducteurs et les commentateurs actuels de la Sagesse de Ben Sira: l'auteur a-t-il organisé son livre, lui a-t-il donné une structure et laquelle? Le problème est tel que certains n'ajoutent aucun sous-titre à leur traduction, pas plus pour Ben Sira, il est vrai, que pour les autres livres de la Bible<sup>27</sup>. D'autres se contentent de placer simplement un sous-titre en tête de chaque petite péricope, sans en relier aucune à un ensemble plus vaste, à l'exception de Si 42,15–

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*vation in the Hebrew Language of the Hellenistic Period*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium held at Leiden University [2006] (StTDJ 73; Leiden – Boston – Köln 2008).

<sup>25</sup> *4QInstruction: Sagesse et eschatologie* (StTDJ 81; Leiden – Boston – Köln 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Pour rappel, deux études se sont intéressées à d'autres confrontations: R.A. ARGAL, *I Enoch and Sirach*. A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment (SBL 8; Atlanta, GA 1995); U. WICKE-REUTER, *Göttliche Providenz und menschliche Verantwortung bei Ben Sira und in der Frühen Stoa* (BZAW 298; Berlin 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Ainsi par exemple *The New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha* (New York – Oxford 1989); *The Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha* (Oxford – Cambridge 1989); la nouvelle traduction de *La Bible*, parue à Paris chez Bayard en 2001. Dans sa traduction des fragments hébreux de Ben Sira, Mopsik ne donne même aucune séparation entre les petites péripocopes.

43,33, sur la gloire de Dieu dans la nature, et Si 44–50, l'Éloge des Pères, titre traditionnel<sup>28</sup>.

Parmi les commentateurs récents, on retiendra surtout P.W. Skehan et A.A. Di Lella qui proposent une division du texte en péricopes assez longues où sont regroupées plusieurs plus petites. Zapff fait de même pour quelques ensembles seulement. En fait, c'est surtout dans des monographies ou dans quelques articles que la recherche de ces ensembles a progressé. En voici quelques exemples:

— 1,1–2,18: présentation de la Sagesse, don de Dieu (1,1–10), puis les conditions pour la recevoir: la crainte du Seigneur, attitude fondamentale d'ouverture (1,11–20), la maîtrise de soi, la docilité et la sincérité (1,22–30), enfin la constance dans l'épreuve (2,1–18)<sup>29</sup>.

— 3,1–4,10: la צדקה, au sens de miséricorde, dans les relations, et l'humilité qu'elle suppose.

— 7,1–36: l'humilité comme chemin de l'amour<sup>30</sup>.

— 9,17–10,18; 10,19–11,6: traité sur le gouvernement. En 1967, J. Haspecker avait déjà montré que la première partie est négative, tandis que la seconde est positive<sup>31</sup>. Il en est de même pour 11,10–19.20–28<sup>32</sup>.

— 13,25–14,19: la première partie, négative, décrit l'avare; la seconde, positive, l'homme qui sait vivre et se montrer généreux<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Ainsi les éditions successives de la *Bible de Jérusalem* et de la *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*, de même que la traduction de L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Biblia del Peregrino* (Bilbao 1995).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. mon article "L'addition de Siracide 1,21. Une énigme", *Palabra, Prodigio, Poesía*. In Memoriam P. Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J. (ed. V. COLLADO BERTOMEU) (AnBib 151; Roma 2003) 317–325, spéc. 323.

<sup>30</sup> C. GRANADOS GARCÍA, "La humildad camino del amor. Análisis estructural y semántica de Eclo 7", *EstBib* 62 (2004) 155–169.

<sup>31</sup> J. HASPECKER, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*. Ihre religiöse Struktur und ihre literarische und doktrinaire Bedeutung (AnBib 30; Rom 1967) 136–140; G.L. PRATO, *Il problema della teodicea in Ben Sira*. Composizione dei contrari e richiamo alle origini (AnBib 65; Rome 1975) 369–372. Cf. aussi mon article "Wisdom of the Poor: Sir 10,19–11,6", *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*. Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28–31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands (ed. P.C. BEENTJES) (BZAW 255; Berlin – New York 1997) 153–169.

<sup>32</sup> HASPECKER, *Gottesfurcht*, 65.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. mon article "Qohelet et Ben Sira", A. SCHOORS (ed.), *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* (BETL 136; Leuven 1998) 161–179, spéc. 171–178.

— 15,11–16,14; 16,17–18,14: un long traité, en deux parties, sur la responsabilité personnelle<sup>34</sup>.

— 19,20–20,31: cette unité met en contraste le faux sage, le sot et le vrai sage<sup>35</sup>.

— 22,27–23,27: prière et enseignement sur le bon usage de la parole et sur la maîtrise des passions charnelles<sup>36</sup>.

— 29,1–20: sur l'aide pécuniaire à apporter à un quémendeur: prêt, aumône et cautionnement<sup>37</sup>.

— 31,12–32,13: sur le comportement décent durant les banquets.

— 34,21–35,20: traité sur les sacrifices agréés ou non par le Seigneur<sup>38</sup>.

— 36,18–37,15: sur le discernement dans le choix d'une épouse, d'un ami ou d'un conseiller.

— 38,24–39,11: contraste entre les métiers manuels et celui du scribe.

— 40,1–42,14: traité sur comment laisser à sa mort un bon renom<sup>39</sup>.

— 42,15–51,30: un ensemble varié portant à la louange du Seigneur<sup>40</sup>.

Ce qui caractérise ces ensembles, c'est surtout qu'ils sont thématiques. Leur unité n'est pas fondée essentiellement sur la

<sup>34</sup> Cf. HASPECKER, *Gottesfurcht*, 142-155; PRATO, *Il problema*, 209-299; WICKER-REUTER, *Göttliche Providenz*, 106-187; et mon article "God, Sin and Mercy: Sir 15,11–18,14", *Ben Sira's God*. Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference; Durham – Ushaw College 2001 (ed. R. EGGER-WENZEL) (BZAW 321; Berlin – New York 2002) 118-135.

<sup>35</sup> P.C. BEENTJES, "Full of Wisdom is Fear of the Lord", *EstBib* 47 (1989) 245.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. mon article "Prayer in the Book of Ben Sira. Function and Relevance", R. EGGER-WENZEL – J. CORLEY (eds.), *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran*. Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, 5-9 July 2003 (DCLY 2004; Berlin – New York 2004) 117-135, spéc. 117-118.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. mon article "Prêt, aumône et caution", *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira* (eds. R. EGGER-WENZEL – I. KRAMMER) (BZAW 270; Berlin – New York 1998) 179-189.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. DE ZAN, *Il culto che Dio gradisce* (cf. n. 14).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. A. PIWOWAR, *La vergogna come criterio della fama perpetua*. Studio esegetico-teologico di Sir 40,1–42,14 (Katowice 2006) 40,1–41,13: "La sorte e le paure umane"; 41,14b–42,14: "La vera e la falsa vergogna".

<sup>40</sup> Cf. mon article "Prayer in the Book of Ben Sira", spéc. 122-126.



réurrence de mots tel qu'on peut l'observer, par exemple, dans les analyses d'A. Vanhoye sur l'épître aux Hébreux. En outre plus d'une fois, Ben Sira oppose un aspect négatif à un aspect positif.

Toutefois, toutes les observations indiquées ci-dessus ne permettent pas encore de comprendre comment Ben Sir a organisé son livre. Celui-ci est simplement moins atomisé en petits morceaux. De cette organisation recherchée, on possède déjà quelques clés, mais pas toutes. Certes, peu à peu, la recherche réduit le nombre des énigmes. Arrivera-t-on à les réduire toutes, donnant alors une vision cohérente du livre? Mais Ben Sira a-t-il vraiment voulu organiser son livre de façon cohérente?

### 3. *Une composition par étapes*

Il semble bien que Ben Sira a composé son livre par étapes successives. Certes, Si 24 est au centre du livre et l'on peut discerner une grande inclusion entre Si 1-2 et Si 51: aux extrêmes, la Sagesse et comment l'acquérir (Si 1,1-10; 51,13-30), puis Si 2 parle d'épreuve et 51,1-12 évoque celle que l'auteur a subie. Mais comment se fait-il que les grandes péricopes sur la Sagesse ne se lisent que jusqu'en Si 24 (1,1-10; 4,11-19; 6,18-37; 14,20-15,10)? Si 24,30-34 achève ce grand texte par une autoprésentation de Ben Sira comme sage et, par la suite, on ne trouvera plus que quelques péricopes parlant précisément du sage (37,16-26; 39,1-11; 51,13-30). Le chapitre 24 marque-t-il la fin d'une première composition?

D'autres faits méritent d'être mentionnés. Comment expliquer que Si 24,34 se retrouve en 33,18, d'autant que, comme 24,32-34, 33,16-18 a tout l'air d'une conclusion? Ben Sira aurait apporté un premier complément à son œuvre de 25,1 à 33,18. Ensuite l'hymne de Si 39,12-35 s'achève, à partir de 39,32, comme une conclusion. On peut comprendre pourquoi Ben Sira a placé en finale de ses enseignements ce qui concerne le renom que l'homme laisse à sa mort (40,1-42,14). Suit un texte sur la gloire de Dieu dans la nature (42,15-43,33), dont le dernier verset annonce l'Éloge des Pères.

Toutefois, cet Éloge semble se conclure en 49,14-16 et pourtant Ben Sira ajoute l'éloge du grand prêtre Simon (50,1-21). En 50,27-29 se lit un premier colophon explicite. Il n'empêche que Ben Sira ajoute encore deux textes autobiographiques (51,1-12.13-30). Il semble donc que, par étapes successives et sans réarrangement du texte, Ben Sira ait voulu poursuivre l'éloge et la

louange du Seigneur jusqu'à son époque, avec Simon, et jusqu'à son propre témoignage invitant ses disciples à la louange. Celle-ci avait débuté en 42,15.

Ces quelques faits conduisent à penser que Ben Sira aura composé son livre par étapes. Quant à parler d'*éditions* successives faites par Ben Sira en personne, on n'en possède aucune trace.

#### 4. *L'édition revue et augmentée*

Il est certain que l'œuvre de Ben Sira a connu dans le judaïsme et déjà dans son original hébreu une révision avec additions. On peut la dater approximativement des années allant de 80 avant notre ère jusque vers 80 après. Les auteurs sont inconnus, — C. Kearns a pensé aux Esséniens<sup>41</sup>, — mais il est clair qu'ils tenaient compte des ouvertures théologiques plus récentes: on y reviendra.

Ici, au plan littéraire, on notera, avec S. Bussino, que les réviseurs connaissaient bien l'œuvre de Ben Sira et qu'ils se référaient comme lui à l'Écriture antérieure, la Torâ, les Prophètes et les Psaumes. Souvent ces ajouts manifestent une certaine impatience devant les propos du maître: leur insertion rompt la logique de Ben Sira soit pour l'anticiper (Si 1,5Gr, par exemple, anticipe Si 24), soit pour prendre une tout autre perspective: ainsi Si 1,20c-zSyr; 11,15-16 présent dans les quatre traditions textuelles; 17,21Gr; 23,28Gr; 24,18Gr: "Je suis la mère du bel amour..."<sup>42</sup>; 24,31VL-Vg: "Qui elucidant me vitam aeternam habebunt".

### III. Problèmes théologiques

#### 1. *Un maître de sagesse théologien*

Après le décapage en règle de Qohélet, Ben Sira renoue avec l'antique tradition. Penseur subtil et fascinant, il propose une

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<sup>41</sup> Sa thèse de 1950 a finalement été éditée tout récemment: C. KEARNS, *The Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus. Its Teaching on the Future Life as a Clue to Its Origin* (ed. P.C. BEENTJES) (DCLS 11; Berlin 2011), avec mon *Introduction to Kearns' Dissertation*, 9-21.

<sup>42</sup> Sur ce verset, j'ai proposé une autre lecture dans mon article "Les additions grecques et latines à Sir 24", cf. *supra* note 21, spéc. 196-201.

somme qui n'a point son pareil à son époque. Il a conscience de prendre la relève des prophètes et d'apporter une lumière qui passera outre sa ville, Jérusalem, et sa génération (Si 24,32-33). Lecteur attentif du patrimoine religieux et spirituel de son peuple (cf. Prologue 7-10; 38,34c-39,1), il aborde en croyant sincère et paisible toutes les questions qui préoccupaient les sages. Maître de sagesse, il tint une école où se formait la meilleure jeunesse appelée un jour à prendre des responsabilités dans la société juive (51,23). Face à l'hellénisme envahissant, mais pas encore persécuteur, Ben Sira revendique la valeur de la révélation biblique (1,1-10; 24) et de ses héros du passé, — l'Éloge des Pères (44-50), — tout en restant ouvert à certaines pratiques grecques, comme les symposiums (32,1-13). Profondément religieux, sans pourtant être prêtre, quoi qu'on ait dit, il admire les fastes du culte et compte sur le sacerdoce sadocite pour assurer l'avenir de la nation (45,26Hb; 50,23-24Hb).

On trouvera une synthèse de son message dans quelques articles fondamentaux<sup>43</sup>. D'autres articles, dans des ouvrages collectifs sur Ben Sira, apportent leur contribution à la mise en lumière de la pensée du sage de Jérusalem<sup>44</sup>. Quelques spécialistes

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<sup>43</sup> A.A. DI LELLA, "Wisdom of Ben Sira", *ABD* 6 (1992) spéc. 940-944; M. GILBERT, "Siracide", *DBS* 12 (1996) spéc. 1426-1437; F.V. REITERER, "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira (1980-1996)", *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research* (voir n. 31), 23-60, spéc. 40-60, repris dans son recueil "Alle Weisheit stammt vom Herrn ...". *Gesammelte Studien zu Ben Sira*. Herausgegeben vom R. EGGER-WENZEL (BZAW 375; Berlin - New York 2007) 51-87, spéc. 67-87.

<sup>44</sup> P.C. BEENTJES (ed.), *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*. Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28-31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands 1996 (BZAW 255; Berlin - New York 1997); R. EGGER-WENZEL - I. KRAMMER (eds.), *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira* (BZAW 270; Berlin - New York 1998); R. EGGER-WENZEL (ed.), *Ben Sira's God. Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference; Durham - Ushaw College 2001* (BZAW 321; Berlin - New York 2002); A. PASSARO - G. BELLIA (eds.), *The Wisdom of Ben Sira. Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology* (DCLS 1; Berlin - New York 2008); G.G. XERAVITS - J. ZSENGELLÉR (eds.), *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira. Papers of the Third International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shime'on Centre, Pápa, Hungary, 18-20 May, 2006* (JSJS 127; Leiden - Boston 2008). Ces cinq recueils contiennent aussi d'autres études critiques et historiques concernant Ben Sira et son œuvre. Deux autres recueils offrent partiellement des études sur Ben Sira: N. CALDUCH-BENAGÉS -

de la Sagesse de Ben Sira ont rassemblé en un volume leurs contributions parues en divers endroits<sup>45</sup>. D'autres se sont attachés à tel ou tel thème de son livre, comme la louange de Dieu, l'amitié ou la générosité<sup>46</sup>; dans cette ligne, on verra la seconde édition de l'étude de J. Marböck sur les textes concernant la Sagesse dans l'œuvre de Ben Sira<sup>47</sup>. Enfin, quelques thèses récentes se sont attachées à un texte bien défini de Ben Sira<sup>48</sup>.

Tous ces travaux montrent à suffisance combien la Sagesse de Ben Sira est actuellement l'objet de grande attention. Les auteurs de ces recherches travaillent avec une extrême compétence. Ce n'est pas notre propos de les résumer ici. Il est probablement préférable de s'attarder à quelques points précis du message de Ben Sira.

Le premier de ces points concernent la conception que Ben Sira se fait de la Sagesse, de la crainte du Seigneur et de l'obéissance aux préceptes de la Sagesse.

J. VERMEYLEN (eds.), *Treasures of Wisdom*. Studies on Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom. Festschrift M. Gilbert (BETL 143; Leuven 1999), spéc. 1-238, 395-426; J. CORLEY – V. SKEMP (eds.), *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit*. Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M. (CBQ.MS 38; Washington D.C. 2005), spéc. 89-263.

<sup>45</sup> J. MARBÖCK, *Gottes Weisheit unter uns*. Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach (Hrsg. I. FISCHER) (Herders Biblische Studien 6; Freiburg i.Br. 1995); P.C. BEENTJES, "Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom" (Sir 14,20). Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira (Biblical Exegesis and Theology 43; Leuven 2006); F.V. REITERER, "Alle Weisheit stammt vom Herrn ...", mentionné ci-dessus n. 43; B.G. WRIGHT III, *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction*. Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristaeas and the Septuagint (JSJ.S 131; Leiden – Boston 2008), spéc. 1-193.

<sup>46</sup> M. REITEMEYER, *Weisheitslehre als Gotteslob*. Psalmentheologie im Buch Jesus Sirach (BBB 127; Bonn 2000); J. CORLEY, *Ben Sira's Teaching on Friendship* (BJSt 316; Providence, RI 2002); B.C. GREGORY, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*. Generosity in the Book of Sirach (DCLS 2; Berlin 2010).

<sup>47</sup> *Weisheit im Wandel*. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira (BZAW 272; Berlin – New York 1999); la première édition avait paru dans les BBB 37; Bonn 1971.

<sup>48</sup> N. CALDUCH-BENAGES, *En el crisol de la prueba*. Estudio exegético de Sir 2 (ABE 32; Estella [Navarra] 1997); J. LIESEN, *Full of Praise*. Exegetical Study of Sir 39,12-35 (JSJS 64; Leiden 2000); O. MULDER, *Simon the High Priest in Sir 50* (JSJ.S 78; Leiden 2003); M.C. PALMISANO, "Salvaci, Dio dell'universo! Studio dell'eucologia di Sir 36H,1-17 (AnBib 163; Roma 2006); A.J. GUERRA MARTÍNEZ, *El poder de la oración*. Estudio de Sir 51,1-12 (ABE 50; Estella [Navarra] 2010); R. DE ZAN, *El culto che Dio gradisce*.

Pour Ben Sira, dans la foulée de Pr 1-9, la Sagesse est de l'ordre du divin; elle est assimilée à l'Esprit du Seigneur (Si 1,9-10: cf. Jl 3,1-2) et à sa Parole créatrice (24,3; 42,15cHb). C'est Dieu lui-même qui l'accorde à profusion à Israël (1,10b; 24,8), où elle a grandi, telle une plantation généreuse, jusqu'à englober, à partir du temple de Jérusalem, toute la terre de ce peuple (24,10-27). Contrairement à ce qu'on répète, la Sagesse ne s'identifie pas à la Torâ, mais celle-ci, étant plus une histoire qu'une législation (à laquelle Ben Sira s'intéresse peu), doit être comprise comme la meilleure expression de la Sagesse. En effet, non seulement le mot תורה, comme νόμος signifie à l'époque la révélation divine, mais Si 24 décrit une histoire qui dépasse les limites du Pentateuque.

Cette Sagesse, le sage et ses disciples la recherchent aux conditions qu'on a dites (1,20-2,18): elle ne s'obtient qu'au prix d'un long effort de persévérance (4,11-19; 6,18-37; 14,20-27). L'ayant obtenue, le sage est seul en mesure de louer le Seigneur (15,10; 51,13-22): c'est qu'il médite tous les jours l'Écriture (38,34c-39,1) et prie le Seigneur de lui octroyer la Sagesse (39,5-6). Le sage est alors rempli de la Sagesse et, de lui, elle déborde, comme par un canal d'irrigation pour arroser ses parterres: le maître ne fait que la transmettre à ses disciples et à ceux qui recevront son enseignement (24,30-34; 39,12b). Lui, pourtant, se considère comme le dernier venu (33,16), mais il sait aussi que son nom vivra éternellement (37,23-26; 39,8-11).

La crainte du Seigneur est cette disponibilité de l'homme pour accueillir le don de Dieu. Elle est au principe de la Sagesse reçue et elle en est le couronnement (1,11-20). Crainte religieuse, comme l'avait montré J. Haspecker, mais, contrairement à ce que celui-ci pensait, elle n'est pas le thème principal du livre de Ben Sira, qui est bien plutôt la recherche de la Sagesse. Cette crainte est aussi un amour du Seigneur (2,15-17)<sup>49</sup>, qui implique humilité et soumission, en ce sens, comme l'écrivait P.C. Beentjes: *Full Wisdom is fear of the Lord* et *full Wisdom* implique l'accomplissement de la Torâ.

Un second point précis du message de Ben Sira est, chez lui, l'absence de toute perspective outre-tombe. Ce que l'homme laisse

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. aussi les deux leçons en Si 1,10b: "ceux qui l'aiment" (Gr) ou "ceux qui le craignent" (Syr).

à sa mort, c'est un nom, béni ou non (11,27-28). Le sage, celui qui craint le Seigneur, achèvera ses jours dans la plénitude et le bonheur (1,13). C'est bien ainsi que s'achevait le livre de Job. Reste le texte obscur de Si 48,11, à propos du retour d'Élie: É. Puech a proposé cette lecture du texte hébreu qu'il restaure:

Heureux qui te verra avant de mourir,  
car tu rendras la vie et il revivra<sup>50</sup>.

Dans ses derniers compléments, Ben Sira aurait-il modifié sa façon de voir, en s'ouvrant à de nouvelles perspectives eschatologiques?

## 2. La théologie des ajouts

C. Kearns l'a étudiée attentivement et a montré qu'elle développait une eschatologie nouvelle: après la crise maccabéenne, il était apparu que les justes survivraient à la mort (Dn 12,2-3; 2 M 7). En ce sens, on verra, entre autres, les additions de Si 1,20c-zSyr; 19,19bGr; 24,31.45VL-Vg.

De son côté, S. Bussino, en étudiant les ajouts de la version grecque Gr II, y a rencontré évidemment le thème de l'ἀγάπησις. Il apparaît déjà dans l'ajout de Si 1,10cd, texte difficile à comprendre en grec, mais qui, si on reconstruit un hébreu sous-jacent, peut se comprendre de la façon suivante:

L'amour du Seigneur est une abondante sagesse:  
à ceux qui le craignent, il la donne en partage<sup>51</sup>.

Voici encore l'ajout de Si 24,18 tel que je comprends:

Je suis la mère de l'amour vrai et de la crainte,  
de la connaissance et de la sainte espérance.  
Je me donne avec tous mes rejetons,  
éternellement à ses ordres<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle. Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien. I. La résurrection des morts et le contexte scripturaire* (EB 21; Paris 1993) 74-76, 324.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. mon article "Voir ou craindre le Seigneur? Sir 1,10d", *Biblica et Semitica. Studi in memoria di Francesco Vattioni* (ed. L. CAGNI) (Istituto universitario orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor 59; Napoli 1999) 247-252.

<sup>52</sup> Les rejetons sont les produits de la vigne à laquelle la Sagesse se compare en 24,17 et qu'énumère l'addition de 24,18ab.

Enfin, pour ne pas multiplier les exemples, l'ajout de Si 25,12 qui se lit en grec, en latin et en syriaque:

Craindre le Seigneur, c'est commencer à l'aimer;  
lui faire confiance, c'est commencer à s'attacher à lui.

### 3. *Canonicité et inspiration*

Le livre de Ben Sira est considéré par l'Église catholique comme canonique et inspiré. Il ne l'est pas pour le Protestantisme. Cependant tel auteur récent a remis en question la position protestante<sup>53</sup>. Il n'en reste pas moins que, même pour les catholiques, se pose la question de savoir si la version longue de la Sagesse de Ben Sira, c'est-à-dire avec les modifications et ajouts de la seconde édition, est canonique et inspirée. Sur cette question, je me suis exprimé voici près de vingt-cinq ans et personne ne m'a contredit jusqu'à présent<sup>54</sup>. Je note tout d'abord que l'Église n'a jamais précisé, dans ses documents conciliaires, ni l'édition ni la langue du livre de l'Ecclésiastique qu'elle considérerait canonique et inspiré, sauf que le concile de Trente, dans son décret du 8 avril 1546, avait précisé que les livres canoniques sont pris "en entier avec toutes leurs parties, tels qu'on a coutume de les lire dans l'Église catholique et tels qu'ils sont dans l'ancienne édition latine de la Vulgate". Or, la Vulgate donne un texte long de l'Ecclésiastique<sup>55</sup>. Cependant le même concile avait demandé une bonne édition de la Septante et, pour le Siracide, c'est le texte court que l'on publia en 1587. Quant aux Pères de l'Église, les latins citent le plus souvent le texte long et, parmi les grecs, font de même Clément d'Alexandrie et surtout Jean Chrysostome, les autres citant le texte court<sup>56</sup>. Cela revient à dire que l'Église admet deux

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<sup>53</sup> V. KOPERSKI, "Sirach and Wisdom: A Plea for Canonicity", *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J.-M. AUWERS – H.J. DE JONGE) (BETL 163; Leuven 2003) 255-264.

<sup>54</sup> M. GILBERT, "L'Ecclésiastique. Quel texte? Quelle autorité?", *RB* 94 (1987) 233-250.

<sup>55</sup> Il en est de même dans la Néo-Vulgate et dans les traductions liturgiques officielles qui en dépendent: *La Sacra Bibbia*. Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Roma 2008); *Sagrada Biblia*. Versión oficial de la Conferencia Episcopal Española (BAC; Madrid 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. mon article "Jesus Sirach", *RAC* 17 (1996) 878-906. Parmi les études récentes sur les Pères, cf. J. LEEMANS, "Canon and Quotation. Athana-

traditions<sup>57</sup>, mais aussi que l'on ne peut refuser la canonicité et l'inspiration au texte long.

Et qu'en est-il des textes hébreux retrouvés depuis un peu plus d'un siècle? L'Église catholique n'ayant jamais déterminé la langue d'un texte canonique et inspiré, on ne s'étonnera pas non plus de voir des traductions récentes utiliser le texte hébreu là où on le possède<sup>58</sup>.

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On le voit, depuis une vingtaine d'années, les études textuelles, littéraires et théologiques sur le livre de Ben Sira ont connu un véritable regain d'intérêt. Celui-ci ne s'arrêtera pas de sitôt. On est en effet encore loin de pouvoir proposer une édition critique du texte hébreu, toujours incomplet. La structure littéraire de l'ensemble du livre n'a pas encore été découverte, pas plus d'ailleurs que l'histoire de sa composition. Enfin le message de Ben Sira et sa théologie, comme celles de ses traducteurs et de ses réviseurs, nécessitent encore de nouvelles études, par exemple sur le messianisme ou l'eschatologie: quelles ont été les positions du maître de Jérusalem? Ces questions expliquent aussi pourquoi il est toujours difficile de fournir un commentaire de haut niveau sur ce livre. Méconnaître ces difficultés serait tomber dans un relativisme assez simpliste. En attendant d'y voir plus clair, force est de profiter des lumières déjà disponibles.

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sus' Use of Jesus Sirach", J.-M. AUWERS – H.J. DE JONGE (eds.), *The Biblical Canons*, 265-278.

<sup>57</sup> Ainsi les deux premières éditions de la *Bible de Jérusalem*, en 1956 et en 1974, traduisent le texte court, mais l'édition de 1999, le texte long.

<sup>58</sup> Ainsi la *Nueva Biblia Española* (Madrid 1975), où le livre de Ben Sira a été traduit par L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Die Bibel. Altes und Neues Testament. Einheitsübersetzung* (Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1980).



## SUMMARY

This article takes stock of works published over the last twenty years on the book of Sirach. In it the textual, literary and theological problems dealt with these days are discussed in succession. The footnotes provide an ample bibliography on the subject. The conclusion is that research on this book is making great strides, but also that it is far from having solved all these problems.

## **L'argumentation de Ga 3,10-14, une fois encore. Difficultés et propositions**

À lire les études publiées sur Ga 3,10-14 ces dernières années, on ne peut s'empêcher de penser que ces versets restent pour l'exégèse paulinienne une *vexata quaestio*. Si certains essaient tant bien que mal de reconstruire les rouages et les étapes de l'argumentation<sup>1</sup>, d'autres renoncent, tant la logique du passage semble déconcertante. Sans entrer dans une analyse sémantique minutieuse qu'on peut trouver ailleurs, c'est cette logique qui sera réexaminée ici, en ses paradoxes, ses lignes de force et ses limites.

### I. La finalité de Ga 3,6-14

Que Ga 3,6-14 forme une unité rhétorique où la démonstration est exclusivement scripturaire, tous les commentateurs le reconnaissent, et cela ne saurait être contesté. Il est également admis que l'argumentation de Paul se développe en deux unités, les v. 6-9, où Paul affirme le lien essentiel existant entre foi et bénédiction, et les v. 10-14, où il exclut que la Loi<sup>2</sup> porte avec elle la bénédiction et la justification :

- v. 6-9 lien essentiel entre foi et bénédiction (d'Abraham aux Nations):

v. 6 = Gn 15,6 "Abraham crut et cela lui fut compté comme justice"

v. 8 = Gn 12,3/18,18 "Seront bénies en toi/lui toutes les Nations"

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., tout dernièrement, les essais de M. BACHMANN, "Zur Argumentation von Galater 3.10-12", *NTS* 53 (2007) 524-544, et D. MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien de la justification par la foi", *Paul et l'unité des chrétiens*, J. SCHLOSSER (éd.) (Monographies Benedictina – Colloque Œcuménique Paulinien 19; Peeters 2010) 41-48.

<sup>2</sup> Avec une majuscule, ce vocable désigne la *loi mosaïque* et non toute espèce de loi.

- v. 10-14 lien entre Loi et malédiction (pas de justification par la Loi)

- v. 10 = Dt 27,26 “Maudit quiconque ne restera pas en toutes ces choses écrites dans le livre de la Loi pour les observer”
- v. 11 = Hb 2,4 “le juste à partir de la foi vivra”
- v. 12 = Lv 18,5 “qui a observé ces choses vivra par elles”
- v. 13 = Dt 21,23 “Maudit quiconque pend sur le bois”

Ainsi, Paul commence par souligner le fait que la justification advient par la foi (v. 6-9), et montre ensuite que la Loi n'est pas associée à ce processus (v. 10-14). Et il le fait pour laisser entendre que les ethnico-chrétiens ont été justifiés sans être sujets de la Loi, autrement dit sans devoir être circoncis et sans devoir faire les œuvres requises par la Loi. Il importe de noter que les deux unités finissent avec la bénédiction des Nations (autrement dit des non juifs ou des non circoncis) et donc que l'argumentation est orientée positivement. Ce double *terminus ad quem* ne doit pas être oublié:

- v. 8-9 les Nations (ἔθνη) bénies (εὐλογοῦνται) avec Abraham,
- v. 14 qu'à toutes les Nations (ἔθνη) advienne la bénédiction (εὐλογία) d'Abraham.

Si le *terminus ad quem* est clair, le chemin qui y mène l'est beaucoup moins. On perçoit néanmoins aisément que la difficulté affrontée par Paul vient de Gn 17,10-14, où Dieu lui-même dit explicitement au patriarche que le non circoncis devra être retranché du peuple, autrement dit sera exclu de la famille d'Abraham et des bénédictions qui lui furent promises. La circoncision fait ainsi devenir membre du peuple, descendant d'Abraham et sujet de la Loi. Devenir sujet de la Loi est par là-même essentiel pour l'obtention des bénédictions promises à Abraham, puisque, *a contrario*, l'exclusion du peuple (pour cause d'incirconcision) est identiquement une exclusion de la descendance d'Abraham. Paul doit donc montrer que les croyants non juifs sont bénis en Abraham (cf. v. 6-9) sans avoir besoin de passer par la circoncision et devenir sujets de la Loi (cf. v. 10-14). Telle est la finalité de ce passage.

## II. Les versets 6-9

Aux v. 6-9 Paul utilise les Écritures pour montrer que les Gentils ont part aux bénédictions promises à Abraham. Pour lui,

l'important est que l'Écriture ait annoncé par avance (προευηγγελίσατο) la bénédiction des Nations en Abraham, et ce, dès le commencement (Gn 12,3); cette bénédiction ne vient donc pas de ce que Dieu a changé d'avis — elle précède au demeurant Gn 17,10-14. Il a en outre voulu qu'elle advienne en Abraham, et par la foi, comme pour Abraham.

Eu égard à leur finalité, ces versets sont clairs, mais ils soulèvent néanmoins des difficultés, car: (i) s'il faut faire partie du σπέρμα d'Abraham pour avoir en héritage les bénédictions, et s'il faut pour cela être circoncis, comme Dieu le demanda en Gn 17,10-14, les ethnico-chrétiens ne doivent-ils pas passer par la circoncision pour avoir part aux bénédictions? (ii) Les v. 6-9 s'appliquent aussi aux Ἰουδαῖοι qui disent vivre de la foi, une foi qui s'exprime dans l'obéissance à la volonté divine promulguée dans la Loi, une obéissance voulue par Dieu même.

Paul doit donc montrer que les Nations ont obtenu les bénédictions promises à Abraham sans avoir à devenir sujets de la Loi, autrement dit: sans se faire circoncire et devenir ainsi Ἰουδαῖοι. Deux types d'argumentation où le cas d'Abraham est chaque fois normatif: (i) un premier, où il faut montrer que Gn 17 ne rend pas obsolète Gn 15, et ce, en évitant d'établir un lien entre la Loi et la malédiction. C'est le choix fait en Rm 4; (ii) un deuxième, où il faut montrer que, loin d'être nécessaire pour obtenir les bénédictions promises, la Loi porte plutôt à la malédiction. C'est la voie choisie par Paul en Ga 3,10-14.

### III. Les versets 10-12

La logique de ces versets n'a rien d'évident, comme le montrent les interprétations divergentes qui en sont faites<sup>3</sup>. Aussi est-il utile de rappeler les étapes par lesquelles Paul est passé et qui sont au nombre de deux: les v. 10-12, où il est progressivement affirmé que la Loi ne peut justifier, car elle n'a pas partie liée avec

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<sup>3</sup> Outre la liste quasiment exhaustive signalée par M. BACHMANN, "Zur Argumentation von Galater 3.10-12", *NTS* 53 (2007) 324-325; voir également un bref état de la question en D. MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien de la justification par la foi", 39-48.

la foi, et les v. 13-14 où il est dit que c'est le Christ qui a libéré de la malédiction de la Loi. Ces v. 13-14 sont évidemment nécessaires à l'argumentation. Il ne suffit pas en effet de dire que la Loi ne peut justifier (v. 10-12), encore faut-il indiquer par qui ou grâce à qui nous sommes justifiés (v. 13-14).

En ces deux étapes les déclarations de Paul sont chaque fois suivies d'un énoncé biblique les confirmant:

énoncés de Paul	appui scripturaire
ceux qui sont à partir des œuvres de la Loi sont	
sous une malédiction (v. 10a)	← Dt 27,26
par la Loi personne n'est justifié devant Dieu	
(v. 11a)	← Hab 2,4
la Loi ne procède pas de la foi (v. 12a)	← Lv 18,5
—	—
Christ nous a rachetés de la malédiction de la	
Loi ... (v. 13a)	← Dt 21,23

### 1. Les énoncés du v. 10

Le v. 9 disait que ceux qui se réclament de la foi sont bénis avec le croyant Abraham. Mais les juifs estiment qu'eux aussi sont des croyants et que leur attachement à la Loi leur vaudra les bénédictions promises. Paul doit donc maintenant montrer qu'il n'en est pas ainsi.

La première raison, fournie au v. 10a, a fait couler beaucoup d'encre, car la sémantique en est difficile<sup>4</sup>. Qu'entendre par ὅσοι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν? Littéralement: "tous ceux qui sont à partir des œuvres de la Loi", ce que les Bibles ou les commentaires rendent de différentes manières: "Ceux qui se réclament de la pratique de la Loi"<sup>5</sup>, "les pratiquants de la Loi"<sup>6</sup>, "all

<sup>4</sup> J.M. SCOTT, "For as Many as are of Works of the Law are under a Curse" (Ga 3,10), *Paul and the Scripture of Israel*, C.A. EVANS – J.A. SANDERS (eds.) (JSNT Sup 83; Sheffield 1993) 205-228, relevait déjà huit interprétations majeures et ajoutait la sienne. Voir également A. PITTA, *La lettera ai Galati* (Bologna, EDB 1996) 183-186, et A.A. DAS, "Galatians 3:10. The Necessity of Perfect Obedience", *Id., Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA 2001) 145-170.

<sup>5</sup> Traduction de la Bible de Jérusalem.

<sup>6</sup> Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible.

who rely on works of the Law”<sup>7</sup>. Écartons d’abord l’interprétation — heureusement de moins en moins en vogue — selon laquelle le verset décrit ceux qui veulent tirer gloire et valeur de leurs propres œuvres, conformes aux réquisits de la Loi; outre qu’elle caricature l’attitude du juif fidèle, cette lecture ne peut se recommander d’une argumentation où il n’est question ni de fierté ni de vanterie. Mais avec raison les commentateurs rapprochent le ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν du ἐκ πίστεως de Ga 3,7 et 9, auquel il s’oppose<sup>8</sup>. La préposition ἐκ indiquant l’origine (familiale, ethnique, géographique, religieuse, etc.), l’expression désigne ici ceux qui se définissent à partir des mêmes convictions, autrement dit: tous ceux qui, d’origine juive ou non<sup>9</sup>, font de l’observance de Loi<sup>10</sup> le principe de leur rapport à Dieu et aux hommes. Or, ajoute Paul, tous ceux-là sont sous une malédiction (ὕπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν). On a depuis longtemps noté que le v. 10a ne les déclare pas maudits (ἐπικατάρατοι), mais seulement sous la menace d’une malédiction, la raison en étant donnée par le passage scripturaire (Dt 27,26 au v. 10b) qui appuie cet énoncé en le radicalisant. Pour savoir ce que Paul veut dire au v. 10a, il importe donc d’examiner la citation

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<sup>7</sup> Traduction de la RSV. Également J.D.G. DUNN, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA 1993) 170, et bien d’autres.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A.M. BUSCEMI, *Lettera ai Galati*. Commento exegetico (Francescanum Printing Press; Jerusalem 2004) 274, et bien d’autres avant lui.

<sup>9</sup> Le ὅσοι peut inclure plusieurs groupes, (a) les juifs, en particulier ceux ayant refusé de croire au Christ par fidélité à la Loi, (b) ceux des juifs qu’il est coutume d’appeler les judéo-chrétiens, (c) les prosélytes, (d) et ceux des ethnico-chrétiens qui, sans vouloir devenir prosélytes, étaient désireux d’obéir à la Loi.

<sup>10</sup> Je rends ainsi le syntagme ἔργα νόμου, par ailleurs ambigu, car il peut désigner les commandements imposés par la Loi ou leur exécution, autrement dit un style de vie conforme à cette même Loi, comme le montrent les deux lectures de 4QMMT. Pour la première (les commandements), voir par ex. M. BACHMANN, “4MMT und Galaterbrief, מעשי התורה und ΕΡΓΑ ΝΟΜΟΥ”, *ZNW* 89 (1998) 91-113, et pour la deuxième (le style de vie), J.C.R. DE ROO, “The Concept of ‘Works of the Law’ in Jewish and Christian Literature”, S.E. PORTER – B.W.R. PEARSON (eds.), *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (JSNTSS 192; Sheffield 2000) 116-147 (144): “[I]n 4QMMT, ‘works of the law’ refers to the obedient lifestyle of the good Israelite kings, their ‘fearing of the law’ and their ‘seeking of the law’, that is, their desire to know what God wanted them to do, and their ‘good deeds’. ‘Works of the law’ expresses all of these: fearing, seeking, and practicing the law; in short, it stands for living in obedience to God’s law”.

du v. 10b, ces deux énoncés formant, si l'on en croit l'un ou l'autre commentateur, un enthymème, dont Dt 27,26 serait la première prémisses et le v. 10a la conclusion<sup>11</sup>, la prémisses manquante étant alors inférée des énoncés présents<sup>12</sup>:

Premise 1 = v. 10b	(M) everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law (A) is cursed (Dt 27,26).
Premise 2 = missing	(B) All who rely on the works of the law (M) do not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.
Conclusion = v. 10a	(B) All who rely on the works of the law (A) are under a curse.

Ce syllogisme soulève quelques difficultés. Que la Loi ne soit pas obéie par tous, c'est un fait dénoncé par les prophètes; mais il existe des juifs, et le pharisien Saul le premier<sup>13</sup>, qui n'hésitent pas à se déclarer irréprochables, et ne sauraient donc admettre la prémisses manquante<sup>14</sup>. Notons aussi que pour les écrits bibliques la catégorie de ceux qui observent la Loi n'est ni irréaliste ni utopique<sup>15</sup>. Ensuite, ceux qui, malgré tous leurs efforts, ne peuvent arriver à une totale irrépréhensibilité, savent compter sur la miséricorde et le pardon de Dieu, persuadés qu'ils sont d'avoir part aux bénédictions promises par Dieu à ceux qui aiment sa Loi. Le juif qui veut obéir à la Loi n'exclut donc ni la miséricorde ni le pardon pour les manquements et les imperfections<sup>16</sup>. Si la citation de

<sup>11</sup> Le v. 10a étant ce qu'il faut démontrer est encore appelé par certains la *propositio* du passage.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. par ex. DAS, "Galatians 3:10", 146, que je me contente de citer, en changeant l'ordre des composantes logiques (A, B et M) pour mieux mettre en évidence la forme du raisonnement. Il s'agit d'un syllogisme de première figure, où le moyen terme (M), qui ne se retrouve pas dans la conclusion, est placé au début de la première prémisses et à la fin de la deuxième; tel quel, le syllogisme relevé par Das n'appartient à aucun des quatre types toujours vrais, ceux en *barbara*, *celarent*, *darii* et *ferio*, ce qui oblige à vérifier la vérité de chaque prémisses. En outre, (M) et (A) ne se correspondent pas exactement d'un énoncé à l'autre, ce qui rend problématique la construction du syllogisme.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ga 1,14b; Ph 3,6.

<sup>14</sup> Autrement dit la prémisses 2 du schéma.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. par ex. Ps 118/119,51.61.109; Qo 8,14; Sg 2,10.12.18; 4,7; 5,15; 10,20; Dn 13,3 LXX; Lc 1,6; 2,25. Également, toutes les affirmations des psaumes où il est demandé aux justes de louer, ce qui suppose évidemment leur existence.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Pr 24,16 ("Sept fois le juste tombe, mais Dieu le relève"), toutes les

Dt 27,26 déclare maudits ceux qui ne maintiennent pas en vigueur tous les commandements de la Loi<sup>17</sup>, c'est pour souligner le sérieux de la situation à tous ceux dont la Loi est la règle de vie: toute transgression fait courir le risque de malédiction<sup>18</sup>; en reprenant Dt 27,26 et en lui donnant une extension maximale<sup>19</sup>, Paul en souligne le sérieux<sup>20</sup>.

Ce que nous avons jusqu'à présent mis en évidence peut être ainsi résumé: (a) L'apôtre commence par avertir les pratiquants de la Loi qu'ils doivent lui être intégralement fidèles sous peine d'encourir une malédiction. (b) Les commandements à pratiquer ne sont pas seulement ceux concernant les *boundary markers*<sup>21</sup>, car la manière dont la citation est reprise montre à l'évidence que Paul n'envisage pas qu'une série de commandements mais bien *tous*. (c)

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confessions des péchés post-exiliques et les psaumes plus tardifs, tel le Ps 102/103, selon lequel le premier des bienfaits divins est le pardon.

<sup>17</sup> À la différence du grec, le texte hébreu de Dt 27,26 n'a pas le כל, mais il y est en Dt 28,1, dans le grec et l'hébreu: ποιῆσαι πάντα τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ et ποιεῖν πάσας τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien", 43, dont la formulation est très juste: "[L]a pratique de la Loi est surplombée par une potentielle malédiction". Les expressions ὑπὸ κατάραν du v. 10a et ἐπικατάρατος du v. 10b ne sont pas équivalentes. Il est pour cette raison malvenu d'en faire le même terme (B) d'un syllogisme en *barbara* ainsi reconstruit: la majeure (10b) étant composée de (M) et (B), la mineure (v. 11a), de (A) et (M), et la conclusion (v. 10a), de (A) et (B), comme le suggèrent Bachmann ("Zur Argumentation", 536-540, en particulier le schéma de la p. 539) et d'autres. Si le ὑπὸ κατάραν du v. 10a et le ἐπικατάρατος du v. 10b ne sont pas équivalents, alors le ὅσοι du v. 10a et le πᾶς ὁ du v. 10b n'ont pas la même extension (puisque, selon le témoignage même des Écritures, tous les sujets de la Loi ne sont pas maudits).

<sup>19</sup> On a fait observer que, tout comme Dt 28,58, Dt 27,26 semble renvoyer au seul livre du Deutéronome. Cf. par ex. BACHMANN, "Zur Argumentation", 527.

<sup>20</sup> On retrouve une observation semblable à celle de Ga 3,10 en Jc 2,10: ὅστις γὰρ ὅλον τὸν νόμον τηρήσῃ πταισῇ δὲ ἐν ἐνί, γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος.

<sup>21</sup> DUNN, *Galatians*, 172, pour qui ceux visés au v. 10 sont "those who, in his [Paul] judgement, were putting too much weight on the distinctiveness of Jews from Gentiles, and on the special laws which formed the boundary markers between them, those who rested their confidence in Israel's 'favoured nation' status, those who invested their identity too far in the presumption that Israel was set apart from 'the nations' — including, of course, the Jewish Christians in view in 1:6-8 and 2:4.12".



Le v. 10 forme une unité rhétorique et démonstrative; il n'est donc pas besoin de lui rattacher le v. 11a qui, on va le voir, répond à d'autres questions. (d) En admettant même que beaucoup aient encouru la malédiction, le v. 10 ne suffit pas comme preuve, car il y a encore tous ceux qui font leurs délices de la Loi de Dieu, ceux-là mêmes que les Écritures appellent justes. L'apôtre doit ainsi aller plus avant et montrer que, même pour ceux-là, l'obéissance aux commandements de la Loi ne saurait faire devenir juste. Tel est le propos du v. 11.

## 2. *Les énoncés du v. 11*

Certains exégètes présentent la progression de l'argumentation du passage en faisant des v. 11-12 une seule unité logique qu'ils pensent voir articulée sous forme de syllogisme et qu'on peut, en simplifiant, décrire ainsi<sup>22</sup>:

Premise 1 = v. 11b	(A) the one who is righteous (M) will live of faith (Hab 2,4),
Premise 2 = v. 12a	(B) the Law (M) is not of faith,
Conclusion = v. 11a	(B) the Law (A) makes no one righteous.

En réalité, comme celui qui le précède, le v. 11 forme — sans le v. 12 — une étape de la démonstration dont il va nous falloir montrer l'unité et la fonction.

Une brève exégèse de ce verset s'impose avant toute discussion sur son sens. La syntaxe du v. 11a fait à première vue difficulté à cause de la répétition de la conjonction ὅτι. Le deuxième ὅτι est manifestement causal et a pour fonction d'introduire la citation biblique (Hab 2,4) sollicitée pour appuyer le v. 11a. Quant au premier ὅτι, il suffit de supprimer l'hyperbate et de rétablir l'ordre

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<sup>22</sup> Cf., par ex., BACHMANN, "Zur Argumentation", 538-539; MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien", 44. Le v. 11a étant ce qu'il faut prouver (= conclusion) se trouve de ce fait en dernière ligne. Ce syllogisme est de deuxième figure, autrement dit: le terme moyen (M) se trouve à la fin de chaque prémisse et, de positif, passe au négatif; il en est de même pour le terme (A), positif dans la première prémisse, et négatif dans la conclusion. Les termes (A) et (B) étant universels il aurait fallu en rigueur de termes, les rendre ainsi: (A) = "all those who"; (B) = "all the commands of the Law". Comme on peut le voir, il s'agit d'un syllogisme en camestres (où la lettre 'a' désigne une majeure universelle positive, et 'e', une mineure et une conclusion universelles négatives).

des mots pour constater qu'il est completif, car il se rattache au  $\delta\eta\lambda\omicron\nu$ : "il est évident *que* ( $\delta\eta\lambda\omicron\nu$   $\delta\tau\iota$ ) dans/par la Loi personne n'est justifié devant Dieu". Le  $\epsilon\nu$  νόμῳ a-t-il un sens spatial ou instrumental? Si l'on opte pour le premier, on lit alors que "dans le système mosaïque" — autrement dit: pour les sujets de la Loi — personne n'obtient justification aux yeux de Dieu. Et si l'on opte pour le deuxième: que personne n'est justifié devant Dieu "par le moyen de la Loi"<sup>23</sup>. Si cette deuxième lecture semble plus recommandée, l'une et l'autre peuvent être considérées comme *grosso modo* équivalentes: Paul a probablement utilisé la préposition  $\epsilon\nu$  au lieu du  $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$  instrumental pour éviter de décrire la Loi comme moyen de justification — ce que, pour lui, elle ne saurait être. L'une et l'autre lecture du  $\epsilon\nu$  νόμῳ soulèvent au demeurant des difficultés. Avec la première ("dans la Loi"), il faut conclure qu'aucun sujet de la Loi, même celui qui fait le bien, ne peut être justifié ou devenir juste. Mais pareille conclusion va directement contre tous les passages bibliques — une liste succincte en a été donnée plus haut — où des sujets de la Loi sont déclarés justes. Dire qu'aucun sujet de la Loi ne peut être juste devant Dieu va donc contre la parole même de Dieu. Si l'on choisit l'autre lecture, selon laquelle personne ne devient juste devant Dieu par le moyen de la Loi, c'est-à-dire en mettant en pratique les commandements divins, la difficulté est la même: nombre d'écrits bibliques, on l'a vu, disent le contraire.

Comme la déclaration du v. 11a semble démentie par les faits et par la parole divine elle-même, Paul doit absolument trouver dans les Écritures un texte déclarant que personne n'est juste devant Dieu par un agir conforme à la Loi. Il aurait pu reprendre le Ps 142/143,2 déjà sollicité par lui en Ga 2,16, et dont l'extension universelle montre qu'il vaut aussi pour les sujets de la Loi: "aucun vivant [en Ga:  $\pi\alpha\sigma\alpha$   $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\zeta$ ] ne sera justifié devant toi [Dieu]". Mais il lui a préféré Hab 2,4:  $\acute{o}$   $\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$   $\epsilon\kappa$   $\pi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$   $\zeta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ , citation qui a fait couler beaucoup d'encre, car elle ne correspond ni à l'hébreu ni au grec<sup>24</sup>. Sans entrer dans une discussion sur la formulation que Paul donne au texte d'Habacuc,

<sup>23</sup> Sens retenu par H.D. Betz, dans les deux versions, allemande et anglaise, de son commentaire sur Galates. Cette lecture est plus suivie que l'autre.

<sup>24</sup> Le problème est le même en Rm 1,17b.

disons seulement que pour savoir si le ἐκ πίστεως doit être rattaché au sujet ou au verbe, il suffit ici de le mettre en parallèle avec la citation suivante de Lv 18,5:

Hab 2,4	ὁ δίκαιος	ἐκ πίστεως	ζήσεται
Lv 18,5	ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ	ἐν αὐτοῖς	ζήσεται

Les deux citations sont composées de trois membres ayant respectivement la même fonction, même si, dans le précédent schéma, le ἐν αὐτοῖς n'y a pas la place qui la sienne en Ga 3,12 et Lv 18,5; et comme ce syntagme modifie le verbe ("vivra en/par eux"), il doit en être de même pour ἐκ πίστεως en Ga 3,11b: "Le juste vivra de la foi". Le v. 11 devient alors plus clair: personne ne peut être justifié par la pratique de la Loi, car c'est la foi qui fait le juste. On voit où Paul veut en venir: si le juste vit de la foi, cela n'a pas de sens de devenir sujet de la Loi pour être juste; les croyants venus de la Gentilité n'ont ainsi pas besoin de se faire circoncire et de devenir juifs, puisque la justification leur vient de la foi.

La citation d'Hab 2,4 soulève néanmoins une autre difficulté, car le juif observant confesse lui aussi que c'est la foi qui le fait vivre, mieux: que c'est sa foi qui lui fait désirer observer la Loi et répondre ainsi à la volonté divine. Dès lors, la citation d'Habacuc peut également décrire le juif pour qui la pratique de la Loi a pour but de manifester la foi et de la rendre opérante. En d'autres termes, si le v. 11 laisse entendre que seule la foi rend juste aux yeux de Dieu, de soi il ne bouleverse pas la situation de ceux qui se recommandent de la Loi. La citation d'Habacuc vaut *a fortiori* pour les sujets de la Loi dont l'agir n'est pas irréprochable et qui vivent du pardon de Dieu; ils savent ne pas pouvoir être justes par leurs œuvres et s'en remettent à la miséricorde de Dieu: c'est la foi en son pardon qui les fait eux aussi vivre. Bref, la citation d'Habacuc peut s'appliquer à ceux qui se recommandent de la Loi, qu'ils l'observent fidèlement ou non, parce que leur agir est enraciné dans la foi en ce Dieu qui leur révèle sa volonté en leur donnant la force de l'accomplir et/ou parce qu'ils croient que c'est le pardon qui les fait vivre et espérer le salut.

Le v. 10 déclarait que ceux qui se recommandent de la Loi sont sous la menace d'une malédiction; le v. 11 va plus loin, puisqu'il ajoute que c'est la foi et non l'observance de la Loi qui rend juste, Voilà pourquoi il constitue une étape distincte dans le développe-

ment de l'argumentation et doit en un premier temps être analysé seul. Mais il ne remet pas davantage en question la nécessité de passer par la Loi. Voilà pourquoi Paul va devoir maintenant notifier que le régime de la Loi n'est pas fondé sur la foi.

### 3. *Les énoncés du v. 12*

Le v. 12a (ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως) va sans aucun doute plus loin que ceux de 10a et 11a, car il donne clairement à entendre que le régime de la Loi n'est pas une voie de salut et que les croyants venus de la Gentilité n'ont pas à se faire circoncire et à devenir sujets de cette Loi pour hériter des bénédictions promises à Abraham le croyant. Si la foi seule justifie, sans la Loi, il est effectivement inutile de passer par la Loi. Mais comme la validité du v. 12a vient de la citation implicite qui l'accompagne (Lv 18,5), il importe d'examiner cette dernière de plus près.

Lv 18,5 est également cité en Rm 10,5 et les commentateurs notent tous avec raison que ce verset du Lévitique<sup>25</sup> est représentatif de la spiritualité juive qui à aucun moment ne l'interprète négativement. Dieu demande à ceux de son peuple de garder ses commandements, parce qu'en les mettant en pratique ils vivront: pour le juif, la seule condition pour vivre est de faire la volonté de Dieu. Accolée à celle d'Hab 2,4, cette citation ne peut être interprétée par les sujets de la Loi que comme une manière de concrétiser leur foi, car cette dernière s'exprime dans l'observance des commandements et vit de cette obéissance. Paul se méprend-il sur le sens de Lv 18,5, et donne-t-il donc des bâtons pour se faire battre?

Une lecture en totale opposition à celle du juif pieux est également possible: Paul placerait en contradiction Hab 2,4 et Lv 18,5<sup>26</sup>. Faire précéder Lv 18,5 par Hab 2,4 conduirait à "disqualifier le texte du Lévitique", et plus globalement "à disqualifier théologiquement une parole de la Torah à partir d'une parole prophétique"<sup>27</sup>. Mais telle n'est pas la fonction du rapprochement opéré

<sup>25</sup> La lecture de Ga 3,12b (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς) est très proche de celle de Lv 18,5 LXX (ᾧ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien", 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> MARGUERAT, "L'évangile paulinien", 45. L'auteur a pourtant vu que Paul utilise une *gezerah shawah*, mais celle-ci ne vise *jamaïs* à discréditer un

par une *gezerah shawah*, en particulier celle-ci<sup>28</sup>. Quelle est-elle donc? Celle d'expliquer un passage scripturaire à l'aide d'un autre pour résoudre d'apparentes contradictions dans la Torah ou entre la Torah et les prophètes, le principe qui autorise à rapprocher les passages étant l'unité sémantique des Écritures. Comment, pour Paul, Lv 18,5 et Hab 2,4 s'éclairent-ils réciproquement? En ce qu'ils décrivent l'un et l'autre deux régimes différents: Hab 2,4 caractérise celui de la foi, où le croyant s'en remet totalement à Dieu sans vouloir ni pouvoir se donner à lui-même ce qu'il espère, alors que Lv 18,5 évoque à grands traits celui de la Loi, qui exige l'agir et juge le résultat de l'agir. Le sujet de la Loi est responsable du résultat de son agir, alors que le croyant attend tout de Celui à/en qui il croit. Foi et Loi sont donc bien deux principes différents. Ces considérations permettent de ne pas trop vite juger superficiel l'argument de Paul, apparemment basé sur la seule absence des mots πίστις et δίκαιος/δικαιοσύνη en Lv 18,5. Car, si Lv 18,5, décrit correctement le régime de la Loi, alors l'absence de πίστις en ce sommaire confirme l'hétérogénéité des deux principes: ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως. Et s'il en est ainsi, en disant que le juste vit de la foi, Hab 2,4 donne à entendre que la foi *seule* est à l'origine de la justice. Paul est ainsi arrivé là où il voulait. Bref, en rapprochant ces deux passages à l'aide d'une *gezerah shawah*, Paul montre que l'opposition entre les deux régimes, celui de la foi et celui de la Loi, ne vient pas de lui: les Écritures, parole autorisée s'il en est, l'ont énoncée bien avant lui, et lui-même ne fait que les suivre. Notons seulement ici le choix *ad rem* de l'apôtre: c'est un texte de la Loi, Lv 18,5, qui énonce implicitement que la Loi n'appartient pas au régime de la foi!

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passage biblique par un autre, bien plutôt à interpréter l'un par l'autre les deux passages qu'on rapproche. Sur le sujet et la fonction de la technique, qui est de résoudre d'apparentes contradictions dans la Torah (ou même entre cette dernière et les livres prophétiques), voir J.N. ALETTI, "Romains 4 et Genèse 17. Quelle énigme et quelle solution?", *Bib* 84 (2003) 305-326; P. BASTA, *Gezerah Shawah*. Storia, forme e metodi dell'analogia biblica (Subsidia Biblica 26; Roma 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Pour que deux passages soient ainsi rapprochés, il faut qu'ils aient au moins un mot en commun (ici le verbe ζήσεται), que la forme de ce mot soit assez rare et que le contexte respectif des deux passages soit analogue, afin d'éviter toute anarchie sémantique. Il serait trop long de s'interroger ici dans le détail sur la pertinence de la *gezerah shawah* de Ga 3,11-12.

On peut supposer que l'argumentation de Paul, brève et elliptique, n'a pas nécessairement convaincu ceux qui se recommandent de la Loi. Elle a pourtant le mérite d'interroger et de bousculer l'interprétation, alors courante, du rapport entre foi et Loi. Il faut ajouter qu'elle n'est que le prélude d'une plus longue explication sur la nature et le rôle de la Loi, en Ga 3,15-4,7. En d'autres termes: les catégories amorcées en Ga 3,6-14 seront explicitées et justifiées plus longuement dans les développements suivants.

Où en est arrivée l'argumentation à la fin du v. 12? Après avoir rappelé que les sujets de la Loi sont menacés par la malédiction, Paul est allé jusqu'à montrer, de manière extrêmement brève, que la Loi elle-même n'est pas au service de la justice. Ainsi, les sujets de la Loi qui pensaient obtenir la justice par leur agir fidèle et obéissant se trouvent eux aussi dans une situation dramatique. Comment peuvent-ils être définitivement mis hors de portée de la malédiction? Par la foi seule, en celui qui est venu les délivrer de la malédiction. Voyons comment Paul développe sa réponse.

#### IV. Les versets 13-14

##### 1. Dt 21,23 — *un choix paradoxal*

Avant de présenter brièvement la fonction de ces versets en Ga 3,10-14, reconnaissons, avec plusieurs commentateurs, que la citation Dt 21,23 est apparemment contre-productive, car comment celui qui mourut en croix, apparemment maudit, a-t-il pu être porteur d'une bénédiction universelle? On a du mal à imaginer les premiers disciples de Jésus utilisant ce verset dans leurs discussions avec leurs coreligionnaires juifs. Il a fallu beaucoup de culot à Paul pour faire de ce verset une preuve. Mais que prouve-t-il exactement? Que Jésus est mort pour nous, ou, bien plutôt, qu'étant mort sur une croix, il fut frappé par la malédiction? Or, Paul insiste effectivement sur la malédiction. Certes, et tous les commentateurs le rappellent, il ne cite pas textuellement la LXX:

Dt 21,23 LXX	κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ	πᾶς κρεμάνενος ἐπὶ ξύλου
Ga 3,13b	ἐπικατάρατος	πᾶς ὁ κρεμάμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου

Le participe parfait passif *κεκατηραμένος* est devenu un adjectif verbal, *ἐπικατάρατος*, et le mot *θεός* est omis: son absence vient de ce que Paul a voulu manifestement éviter de dire que Dieu avait maudit Jésus, son Fils. Et comme le participe passif aurait pu lui aussi être interprété comme un passif théologique, il a été remplacé par l'adjectif, qui fait pendant au même adjectif du v. 10b et forme avec lui une *gezerah shawah* sur laquelle nous allons revenir. Notons auparavant que *ἐπικατάρατος* indique comment comprendre le substantif *κατάρα* du v. 13a. Car cet énoncé est amphibologique: qu'entendre par "[Christ est] devenu pour nous malédiction"? Le mot *κατάρα* peut désigner l'action de maudire elle-même, ou sa cause ou encore son résultat<sup>29</sup>. Paul ne veut certainement pas dire que Jésus est cause de malédiction — le verset suivant dit le contraire, à savoir que par lui nous est venue la bénédiction —; il ne peut en être que l'objet ou le destinataire, et si Paul utilise le substantif, c'est pour indiquer que toutes les malédictions, en nombre et en force, sont en quelque sorte tombées sur lui<sup>30</sup>. L'apôtre aurait très bien pu dire que seul le Christ pouvait libérer l'humanité de la malédiction, sans avoir à ajouter qu'il était devenu malédiction et sans citer Dt 21,23, car il ne pouvait être maudit de Dieu, lui l'Innocent par excellence. Par qui fut-il donc maudit? Par la Loi, comme le déclare le v. 13a<sup>31</sup>. Pourquoi donc Paul a-t-il cru bon de rappeler, avec une exagération qu'on retrouve ailleurs chez lui, qu'étant mort pendu au bois, Jésus devint malédiction? On rencontre en effet le même type d'exagération et de tournure métonymique en 2 Co 5,21: "celui qui n'avait pas connu le péché, Dieu le fit péché pour nous ..." <sup>32</sup> Un bref coup d'œil sur la *gezerah shawah* par laquelle Dt 27,26 et 21,23 ont été rapprochés va permettre de répondre à plusieurs questions laissées en suspens.

<sup>29</sup> La tournure est métonymique.

<sup>30</sup> Attribuer un substantif d'action revient à hypostasier le trait, du côté de la cause ("cet homme est la bonté même") ou de l'effet (en Italie, appeler quelqu'un "Amore!").

<sup>31</sup> Sauf erreur, l'expression "malédiction de la Loi" ou son équivalent n'a pas d'autre occurrence biblique et juive intertestamentaire (Qumran, etc.).

<sup>32</sup> Sur ce passage et sa force théologique, cf. J.N. ALETTI, "God made Christ to be Sin (2 Corinthians 5:21): Reflections on a Pauline Paradox", *The Redemption. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer*, S.T. DAVIS – D. KENDALL – G. O'COLLINS (eds.) (Oxford 2004) 101-120.

## 2. La *gezerah shawah* des v. 10b et 13b

Paul a-t-il eu raison de rapprocher Dt 27,26 et 21,23? À dire vrai, il ne s'agit pas d'une *gezerah shawah* au sens strict, dans la mesure où les deux versets n'ont pas le mot commun ἐπικατάπατος: nous l'avons vu plus haut, si l'adjectif se trouve bien en Dt 27,26; Dt 21,23 utilise par contre un participe parfait passif. Cela dit, la racine est la même, puisque l'un et l'autre viennent du même verbe ἐπικαταράσσειν. La difficulté vient d'ailleurs. Pour être valide en effet une *gezerah shawah* ne peut rapprocher que des versets ayant un contexte et une orientation semblables, ce qui est le cas de Dt 27,26 et 21,23, où n'est déclaré maudit que celui mort en croix pour faute gravissime: dans l'hébreu et le grec, la malédiction prononcée au v. 23 est rattachée à une infraction ayant effectivement mérité la mort. Or, en appliquant le verset au Christ, qui n'a commis aucune faute, a fortiori une faute ayant mérité la mort en croix, Paul semble donner raison à ceux qui accusèrent Jésus de blasphème et de rébellion<sup>33</sup> — l'argument serait alors doublement contre-productif. De plus, en ne respectant apparemment pas le contexte et la motivation de Dt 21,23, il semble vider la *gezerah shawah* de sa raison d'être ... L'argument de Paul est en réalité plus probant qu'il n'y paraît. Car si Jésus a pu être déclaré maudit par la Loi, parce qu'il est mort en croix, cela veut dire que cette dernière est incapable de sauver l'innocent de la malédiction. Qu'un innocent soit pendu et meure en croix comme un blasphémateur et un rebelle indique bien que la Loi peut être utilisée contre sa finalité qui est de protéger l'innocent et de condamner le coupable. Le paradoxe est porté à son extrême lorsque celui qui est mis en croix et déclaré maudit au nom de la Loi est celui-là même par qui nous vient la bénédiction. Personne n'est donc à l'abri de la malédiction de la Loi, même pas l'innocent! Que d'autre part la Loi ait été utilisée pour faire condamner l'innocent par excellence signifie qu'elle a manifesté sa faiblesse radicale.

On pourrait encore objecter que nonobstant les plus dures punitions, Israël n'a jamais été maudit par Dieu, à cause des promesses, mais aussi à cause des procédures de conversion prévues par la Loi elle-même: cérémonies pénitentielles, jeûnes, sacrifices pour le

<sup>33</sup> Pour le blasphème, voir Mt 26,65; Mc 14,64; et la rébellion, Lc 23,5.



péché, etc. Si Dt 27,26 dit qu'une malédiction potentielle menace tous ceux qui se recommandent de la Loi, cette même Loi fournit les procédures permettant de l'éviter. Certes, mais la lecture des livres prophétiques plus récents et des écrits juifs inter- ou paratestamentaires confirme l'interprétation de Paul: indéfiniment et jusqu'au seuil de l'ère chrétienne, une telle menace fut prise au sérieux, comme le montrent la multiplication des sacrifices pour le péché et l'appel à la miséricorde divine toujours plus pressant<sup>34</sup>.

Dt 21,23 ne signale pas seulement la vérité paradoxale de Dt 27,26, à savoir que tout sujet de la Loi peut encourir la malédiction et que la Loi elle-même est impuissante à délivrer de la malédiction, il permet aussi de mettre en valeur un des paradoxes auxquels Paul tient tant: c'est au moment où la situation semble la plus désespérée, puisque le Fils de Dieu a été déclaré maudit par la Loi, qu'un retournement fondamental s'opère. Ce passage par l'extrême était-il nécessaire? Si les affirmations de l'apôtre sont fortes – Dieu a fait péché celui qui n'avait pas connu le péché, il a accepté que l'Innocent meure comme un maudit et un rejeté – elles ne sont jamais suivies d'explications ou de justifications. Le paradoxe reste paradoxe, même si sa finalité est chaque fois indiquée: c'est pour nous (ὕπερ ἡμᾶς) qu'il en a été ainsi.

Il importe de souligner maintenant la cohérence d'une argumentation dont nous avons dit en commençant qu'elle restait une *vexata quaestio*. S'il est vrai que le v. 13 se rattache au v. 10, en signalant jusqu'où le pouvoir de malédiction de la Loi est allé, mais aussi et surtout en énonçant le changement radical opéré par la médiation du Christ, comme le schématise le tableau suivant,

v. 10a	déclaration de Paul	Quiconque se réclame de la Loi risque la malédiction
v. 10b	justification par citation	maudit soit qui n'accomplit pas tous les préceptes de la Loi.
v. 13a	déclaration de Paul	Christ devenu malédiction nous délivra de la malédiction de la Loi,
v. 13b	justification par citation	Maudit quiconque pend sur le bois.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. par ex. R.J. BAUTCH, *Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* (Academia Biblica 7; Atlanta, GA 2003), qui présente principalement trois passages de la Bible hébraïque: Is 63,7–64,11; Esd 9,6-15; Neh 9,6-37. On n'oubliera pas la supplication d'Azarya en Dn 2 (grec); 11QS 24; etc.

alors, pourquoi Paul ne passe-t-il pas directement du v. 10 au v. 13, ce qu'en principe la *gezerah shawah* l'autorise à faire? Parce que, s'il était allé directement du v. 10 au v. 13, l'impuissance radicale de la Loi n'aurait pas été véritablement établie. De soi, en effet, la *gezerah shawah* externe (Dt 27,26 et 21,23) prouve seulement que la Loi porte avec elle la menace de malédiction et que personne, y compris l'innocent, n'est à l'abri, mais elle ne montre pas qu'il faut sortir du système mosaïque pour obtenir la bénédiction, car le livre du Deutéronome lui-même dit que quiconque désire observer la Loi et l'observe obtient la bénédiction<sup>35</sup>. Si donc les sujets de la Loi ne sont pas tous maudits, alors le Christ ne délivre de la malédiction que les autres. Si Paul n'avait pas montré entre temps l'impuissance de la Loi à justifier, ceux qui obéissent fidèlement à la Loi auraient pu répondre qu'ayant par la Loi l'assurance de la justification, ils n'ont pas besoin de celle en/par Jésus-Christ, réservée à ceux qui ne sont pas sous la Loi ou qui, étant sous la Loi, ne peuvent prétendre être justes à cause de leur agir négatif. Il fallait donc que soit montrés auparavant (i) l'incapacité radicale de la Loi à justifier et (ii) le rôle unique de la foi pour l'obtention de la justification — ces deux points le sont grâce à la *gezerah shawah* interne des v. 11-12. En bref, il existe bel et bien une logique de l'argumentation en Ga 3,6-14. Il n'y a donc pas à se désespérer de la trouver, car, par l'enchaînement des *gezeroth shawoth*, elle se donne progressivement à reconnaître.

### 3. La libération des sujets de la Loi et sa finalité universelle

Au v. 13a, Paul déclare laconiquement: "Christ nous a rachetés<sup>36</sup> de la malédiction de la Loi". Que Christ soit l'auteur de notre libération, Paul le dit de nombreuses fois et de multiples façons. Ce qui est en revanche original ici et ne se trouve pas

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Dt 28,1-14; Ps 1; Ps 119; Ps 128; etc.

<sup>36</sup> Cet essai n'étant pas spécifiquement linguistique, le lecteur consultera les commentaires, tous assez prolixes, sur le sens et l'usage paulinien du verbe ἐξαγοράζειν, qu'on peut sans erreur rendre ici par "libérer".

ailleurs dans les lettres de l'apôtre, c'est l'affirmation concernant la libération de la malédiction de la Loi. Mais qui donc devait être délivré de la malédiction de la Loi: ses sujets seuls, les juifs, ou, avec eux, même ceux qui n'étaient pas sous son pouvoir, les Nations? Bref, qui désigne le ἡμᾶς du v. 13a: les seuls juifs, parmi lesquels se rangerait Paul, ou l'humanité entière? Le pronom ne peut désigner que ceux qui étaient soumis au régime de la Loi. On ne voit pas en effet pourquoi ceux qui n'étaient pas sujets de la Loi auraient encouru une malédiction destinée à ceux-là seuls qui en étaient les sujets, comme le notifie explicitement la série de malédictions de Dt 27. En outre, le passage a un parallèle en Ga 4,4-6, qui invite fortement à voir désignés dans le ἡμᾶς de Ga 3,13a les seuls sujets de la Loi. L'ordre des syntagmes a été changé dans la colonne de gauche du tableau suivant, afin de mettre en valeur les éléments parallèles:

## Ga 3,13-14

γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατὰρα  
Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν  
ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ  
Ἀβραάμ γένηται

## Ga 4,4-5

[Χριστὸν] γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον  
ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ  
ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν.

En Ga 4,5, la libération des sujets de la Loi a pour corollaire immédiat l'adoption filiale de tous les humains, et la même logique s'applique à Ga 3,13-14. Ces deux raisons militent en faveur d'un pronom ἡμᾶς désignant les juifs et ceux se réclamant de la Loi. C'est parce que les sujets de la Loi ont été libérés de la malédiction de cette même Loi que la bénédiction promise à Abraham a pu rejoindre les Nations. En effet, parce que la Loi est enfin apparue comme incapable de justifier, les Nations n'ont plus eu besoin de croire que c'était en devenant ses sujets — autrement dit, en devenant juifs — qu'on pouvait recevoir la justification et les bénédictions eschatologiques. La libération des sujets de la Loi a signifié pour les Nations la possibilité d'obtenir par la foi seule les bénédictions promises au patriarche — le substantif υἰοθεσία étant en Ga 4,5 l'équivalent de ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραάμ en Ga 3,14.

Étant quelque peu elliptiques, ces versets de Ga 3 soulèvent une dernière question. Si le Christ a délivré ses coreligionnaires de la malédiction de la Loi, est-ce pour qu'ils puissent désormais en rester

les sujets, exempts de toute menace et de toute peur? La libération de la malédiction de la Loi n'équivaut-elle pas plutôt à une libération de la Loi elle-même? Comme la menace de malédiction est inséparable de la Loi — il est impossible de supprimer Dt 27 sous peine d'encourir la malédiction! —, la libération de la malédiction ne peut qu'être en même temps une libération de la Loi comme système dans lequel il faudrait entrer et/ou rester pour obtenir les bénédictions promises. Ces versets permettent de comprendre la liberté qui fut celle du Paul disciple de Jésus-Christ.

L'originalité de Ga 3,13-14 et 4,5 est ainsi de déclarer que si l'agir salvifique du Christ a une finalité universelle, son premier bénéficiaire est le peuple d'Israël, le rachat ou la libération de ce premier bénéficiaire étant également condition pour que le reste de l'humanité, constitué par les Nations, puisse aussi hériter du salut et de la dignité qui lui est associée. Si l'enjeu de la libération d'Israël pour le reste de l'humanité est exprimé laconiquement, il ne pouvait l'être plus clairement. Les raisons fournies pour le ἡμᾶς valent pour le ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν qui suit. Ce deuxième pronom doit, sous peine d'anarchie sémantique, avoir le même référent que le précédent. C'est par solidarité avec les sujets de la Loi que le Christ est devenu malédiction, mais c'est aussi pour leur bien, autrement dit, pour leur libération. On ne saurait donc dire que la sotériologie paulinienne ignore ce que fit le Christ pour ceux de son peuple, jusqu'où alla sa solidarité avec eux et pour eux. Prendre au sérieux ce passage interdit de voir en Galates une sotériologie de la substitution<sup>37</sup>: ni en Ga 3 ni en Ga 4 il n'est dit que ceux qui ont été libérés de la malédiction de la Loi sont exclus des bénédictions patriarcales. Sinon, à quoi aurait-il servi de les racheter ou de les libérer?

## V. Ga 3,6-14 et son interprétation

Avec le v. 14, Paul arrive au but: les croyants venus de la Gentilité n'ont pas à se faire circoncire, autrement dit à devenir juifs, sujets de la Loi, pour obtenir les bénédictions promises à

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<sup>37</sup> Sur le sujet, voir l'interprétation de R.H. BELL, *The Irrevocable Call of God. An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel* (WUNT 184; Tübingen 2005)

Abraham. Sans doute n'est-il pas inutile de montrer comment l'apôtre a procédé tout au long des deux unités (Ga 3,1-5 et 6-14) qui inaugurent l'argumentation théorique de sa lettre.

#### 4. *La logique de l'ensemble du parcours*

En Ga 3,1-5, Paul rappelle que c'est par la foi que les ethnico-chrétiens ont reçu l'Esprit de la promesse. Cette première étape est essentielle et c'est souvent par elle que Paul commence: la première des preuves est fournie par l'expérience, autrement dit par ce que vivent les croyants. Car si les chrétiens venus de la gentilité n'avaient pas reçu l'Esprit et les dons qui l'accompagnent, toute autre preuve tiendrait du nominalisme.

Mais si l'expérience constitue la première preuve, elle ne suffit pas; elle doit être confrontée avec la parole de Dieu, aux principes mêmes fixés par Dieu pour les croyants. En d'autres termes, si Paul commence par les faits, il doit ensuite montrer que le vécu des croyants ne remet pas en question la parole divine mais est bien plutôt confirmé par elle. Aux preuves par les faits doivent succéder celles par les principes ou λόγοι divins. En quoi les principes divins montrent-ils à leur tour que les chrétiens issus de la gentilité, les ἔθνη, n'ont pas à devenir sujets de la Loi? En ce que la justification advient par la foi (v. 6-9) et sans les œuvres de la Loi, car la Loi ne saurait justifier (v. 10-12). L'apôtre peut alors revenir à l'événement décisif, celui de la mort en croix du Christ, par lequel les sujets de la Loi ont été libérés et les Nations ont pu recevoir l'Esprit. Il est intéressant de noter que Paul ne part pas de la croix, mais y arrive progressivement. Sa valeur universelle, en effet, pour Israël et les Nations, ne pouvait être établie tout de suite; il fallait auparavant montrer que le régime de la Loi était porteur de malédiction et n'avait pas son origine dans la foi. Sinon, les sujets de la Loi auraient pu objecter qu'ils n'avaient pas besoin du Christ, ayant dans la Loi tout ce qu'il leur fallait pour obtenir justification et salut. Cela dit, Paul est loin d'avoir fini sa réflexion. Il lui faut aussi dire pourquoi, si elle n'a

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157, et ma propre réponse, *Essai sur l'ecclésiologie des lettres de Saint Paul* (EB 60; Paris 2009) 96-97.

pas apporté avec elle la justification, la Loi fut promulguée. Tel est le parcours qui va aller de Ga 3,15 à 4,7.

### 5. De quelques interprétations de Ga 3,10-14

L'itinéraire suivi par Paul ayant été mis en évidence, il est désormais possible de voir pourquoi l'une ou l'autre interprétation du passage qui fit florès dans le passé, n'est plus aujourd'hui tenable. Il y a encore quelques décennies les commentateurs dans leur ensemble lisaient ce passage en insistant sur l'opposition entre foi et œuvres. On voyait la foi comme dépendance totale et les œuvres comme auto-suffisance, comme moyen d'établir sa propre valeur. Dieu dépendait en quelque sorte de l'agir du fidèle, lui devant récompense et justice. La prise au sérieux de la rhétorique paulinienne a modifié l'approche exégétique et rendu obsolète cette lecture qui réduisait la problématique de la justification à une opposition entre autojustification et justification du pécheur. La difficulté à laquelle fut confrontée la première génération chrétienne fut évidemment tout autre. Pour Paul et les autres apôtres il s'agissait en effet de savoir si les croyants venus du paganisme devaient ou non se faire circoncire pour avoir part aux bénédictions promises à Abraham. Gn 17,10-14 était le texte clef, celui qui exigeait la circoncision sans échappatoire possible. Et comme il n'y avait aucun texte biblique disant le contraire de ce passage, Paul dut recourir plusieurs fois à la technique de la *gezerah shawah* pour montrer que les Écritures confirmaient sa position. L'importance de l'argumentation scripturaire indique manifestement que l'ancienne lecture s'était fondamentalement trompée sur la problématique de la justification.

Dans les dernières décennies du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la *new perspective* renouvela la question. Pour ses représentants, ce ne fut pas l'alliance et la Loi comme telles qui firent difficulté, bien plutôt les règles de séparation, en particulier la circoncision, qui déterminaient avant tout l'identité juive – les fameux *identity markers*. Aux croyants d'origine juive qui tenaient absolument à la circoncision des croyants venus de la gentilité, Paul aurait reproché d'absolutiser ces *identity markers* (circoncision, règles alimentaires et de purification, fêtes religieuses). Sans nier que ces règles constituaient des obstacles concrets importants, chacune des argumentations de Paul concernant l'obtention de la justification va beaucoup plus loin. Il

ne demande pas seulement de relativiser ces règles — il s'agit là d'une conséquence —, mais d'admettre que le système législatif mosaïque — qu'il n'identifie pas à la Torah comme prophétie — ne mène pas au salut. La question qu'il soulève en Ga 3, mais aussi en Rm 4 est, on le voit, radicale.

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L'exégèse des lettres pauliniennes a changé de paradigme au cours de ces deux dernières décennies, et ce n'est pas un mal. L'attention nouvelle donnée à la rhétorique de l'apôtre a permis d'éviter des précompréhensions dommageables. On ne peut que s'en réjouir. C'est sans aucun doute grâce à ces changements qu'une exégèse plus rigoureuse de Ga 3,10-14 est devenue et a été possible.

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#### SUMMARY

More technical than in the past, the interpretation of Ga 3,10-14 tries to pay attention to the enthymemes and to find the syllogisms which would support Paul's reflection. This article shows that it is much better and surer to have a very close look at the *gezeroth shawoth*.

## On Jesus' last week(s)

My previous article has dealt with the chronology of Jesus' Last Supper<sup>1</sup>. A reassessment of A. Jaubert's hypothesis on the intricacies of the lunar and solar ancient calendars has shown the priority of John, as far as accuracy is concerned. The fourth Gospel is quite plain, but the Synoptics witness a significant amount of reworking by the early Church, which has turned the Jesus' Passion narrative into a Christianized Passover, culminating with the cross. Now the obvious discrepancy between "risen on the third day" (1 Cor 15,4) and "breaking the bread on the first day of the week" (Acts 20,7) has variously been explained away, but a review of ancient customs, both Jewish and Christian, allows us to build a picture of Jesus' last days below the reworking of tradition.

### I. Customs and Literary Issues

In the four Gospels, the Passion narrative spans one full day and displays a great concentration of events. They appear within many institutions and customs, both Jewish and Christian, which are somewhat distorted. Considering that Pauline Christianity first existed without a New Testament, it is useful to consider early Church traditions, for they, somewhat unexpectedly, shed light on some Gospel features.

#### 1. *About the Eucharistic Bread*

There is no doubt that in early times the Eucharistic rite was performed with normal bread. Some testimonies can be adduced. After having spoken of the Passover lamb, Justin Martyr says (*Dial.* § 41) that the Biblical type or figure of the Eucharistic bread

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<sup>1</sup> See "On Jesus' Last Supper", *Bib* 91 (2010) 348-369.



is the fine flour offering brought along by a leper after his cleansing (Lev 14,10). This analogy is all the more striking because he had just stated that the Passover sacrifice was Christ, adding the following quote from Isaiah: "*Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter*" (Isa 53,7). So, in spite of a context of Passover interpretation, he ignores the unleavened bread, thus proving that he did not attach any Eucharistic significance to it. In the IV<sup>th</sup> century, bishop Ambrose of Milan (*De sacramentis*, IV:4) refers to normal bread for the Eucharist (*panis usitatus*). Unleavened bread was introduced later, but only in the Western Church and mainly for practical reasons: it is whiter, purer, and easier to store. It was first mentioned by Alcuin of York (ca. 740-804), during the age of the Carolingian empire. Later, this led to the worship of the Holy Sacrament. The introduction of unleavened bread in the Eucharist was supported by the text of 1 Cor 5,7, where Paul holds the traditional Jewish view that leaven is a symbol of evil. Such a custom was never accepted in the Eastern Churches, for the ἄζυμος (unleavened) bread was deemed to be an insult, making Christ ἄψυχος "without a soul". Only when this became a serious issue between the Churches was the Passover context of the Last Supper noticed and used as an argument in favor of unleavened bread. It was eventually one of the causes of the East-West Schism in 1054, after which the use of unleavened bread became general in Latin Christendom<sup>2</sup>.

At this point, a methodological rule should be stated. Given the importance of such a ritual detail, one cannot imagine that the Eucharistic use of unleavened bread could have disappeared without any discussion, if it was an element of the original Eucharist. An addition can therefore be made to A. Jaubert's historical hypothesis on Jesus' last Passover: it is necessary to separate the institution of the Eucharist from the days of Unleavened Bread, which include Passover. So the last Supper of the Synoptics should be

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<sup>2</sup> See J.A. JUNGSMANN, *Missarum solemnitas*. The Mass of the Roman Rite. Its Origins and Development (Westminster 1986) II, 305-306. The Armenians, too, have used unleavened bread since ancient times, but this Church may have been close to the Quartodecimans from its very origin, see S. SZYSZMAN, "Une Pâque chrétienne célébrée le mercredi au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle?", *Tradition of the Text*. Studies Offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday (eds. G.J. NORTON – S. PISANO) (OBO 109; Göttingen 1991) 309-310.

split into two components: on the one hand, Jesus' last Passover meal, and on the other the institution of the Eucharist, which would have taken place previously.

Incidentally, these observations show that the reworking of facts and events in the Synoptics has been greater than in John. The common outline of their Passion narrative begins to take shape as a Christianized Passover, starting with the memorial rite and culminating with the crucifixion.

## 2. *Resurrection on the Third Day. Its Celebration*

Paul's *kerygma* mentions Christ's resurrection "the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15,3-4). The stated temporal interval hardly matches a crucifixion late on Friday and resurrection early on Sunday. Counting Friday as the first day, Saturday as the second and Sunday as the third does work somehow, but seems somewhat forced (see Matt 16,61; 17,23; 20,19). Moreover, contrary to his usual habit, Paul does not quote any passages from the Scriptures here. Similarly, Matt 2,23 quotes "He shall be called a Nazorean", which is a passage from a prophetic oracle that is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures. In Matt 12,40, Jesus speaks about the sign of Jonah and declares: "The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". In John 2,19, Jesus tells the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". The short report of Josephus on Jesus<sup>3</sup>, which is more like a report on the Christian faith in Rome, includes (*Ant.* 18:63-64): "On the third day he appeared to [his disciples] restored in life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these things and myriads of others".

The Persian sage Aphrahat (270-345), who follows the Babylonian lunar calendar, offers a solution which actually defines the problem quite clearly (*On the Passover*, § 6-7): in his view, the first

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<sup>3</sup> Since the work of R. EISLER, the discussion about the authenticity of this *testimonium flavianum* has focused upon the sentence "he was the Christ", see L.H. FELDMAN, "The *Testimonium Flavianum*: The State of the Question", *Christological Perspectives* (eds. R.F. BERKEY – S.A. EDWARDS) (Cleveland, OH 1982) 179-205; S. BARDET, *Le Testimonium flavianum*. Examen historique (Paris 2002).

night begins when Judas goes out during the Last Supper; the three hours of darkness by the time of Jesus' death are the second night; the third is the Sabbath night. And after each night, there is a "day": Friday morning, Friday afternoon, and Saturday; for him, Sunday begins on Saturday evening, as in Acts 20,7, but he does not mention any Lord's day liturgy. He further explains that Jesus ate the Passover "on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>" for the Passover of the Jews falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> "night and day". So he understands that the 14<sup>th</sup> began on Thursday evening. This is a distortion of the Jewish calendar, but it matches the Johannine chronology. However, he says in the following section (§ 8) that the great day of the Passion is "Friday 15<sup>th</sup>, night and day". This is in accordance with the Synoptic chronology, but the contradiction is blatant. Maybe "Friday" is simply a mistake for "Saturday", for elsewhere he stresses the significance of Jesus' visit to Death (*Demonstration on Death*, § 4). Interestingly enough, he compares the significance of the days of Unleavened Bread for the Jews and for the Christians, indicating that the latter kept the rite, but he does not make any connection between this and the custom of the Eucharist. To sum up, Aphrahat's explanation underlines the problem instead of solving it.

So the tension between the Biblical three days and the Gospel narratives remains. As for the Jonah reference, it appears to be a broad allusion to the aim of his mission in the conversion of the people of Nineveh. Another passage maybe helpful, although it is not quoted in the NT<sup>4</sup>. In Hos 6,1-2, we read: "[God] has stricken, he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." A *midrash* uses it to give some perspective to a particular detail in the account of Abraham: "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off" (Gen 22,4). It is explained that, at that moment, Abraham was given a glimpse of salvation, after the anxiety of traveling with his condemned son (*Gen Rabba* 56:1)<sup>5</sup>. This is consistent with the next verse, in which Abraham indirectly tells his servants that Isaac is not to die: "Stay here [...] I and the lad will go [...] and we will come back to you" (Gen 22,5). In a number of

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<sup>4</sup> The first Christian writer to adduce it as a proof text for "the third day" was TERTULLIAN, *Praescriptiones contra hereticis*, § 43.

<sup>5</sup> See M. REMAUD, *Évangile et tradition rabbinique* (Bruxelles 2003) 125-130.

other passages, the “third day” is related to the termination of various kinds of difficulties and trials. It is clearly a Biblical expression<sup>6</sup>. Incidentally, the theme of Isaac as a figure of Christ is not prominent in the NT (only Gal 3,16), even though another *midrash* interprets a tiny difficulty in the MT by saying that Isaac’s sacrifice was a true one, for Abraham’s knife touched his neck and resulted in the loss of a drop of blood (*Yalkut Shim’oni*, I:101).

Now, it is useful to draw a distinction between the Biblical meanings of the “three days” or the “third day”, which are not linked to any calendar, and some other items that are. Besides the Friday of the crucifixion, we have a remarkable event in Acts 20,7-12: the night-long vigil at Troas, with the breaking of the bread on the first day of the week and the healing of young Eutychus (“the lucky one”). The calendar used is lunar, since this day begins on Saturday evening — unlike the Creation week. The event takes place sometime after the days of Unleavened Bread and Paul has been in Troas for several days (v. 6). So he is not in a hurry, and the breaking of the bread is unrelated to Passover. In fact, the main point of the story is the resurrection — or healing — of Eutychus (“Lucky”), the rite within a vigil being only circumstantial. So it was just a customary, weekly feature (see v. 1).

An unexpected detail is given: in the Troas house, there were many lamps (λαμπάδες v. 8), which recalls a well-known Jewish custom. Latin satirists (Seneca, Persius Flaccus) railed against the Jews for their idleness and their smoking lamps on the Sabbath<sup>7</sup>. They cannot have meant the lighting of lamps on Friday evening, since the Romans counted the day from midnight, and in any case, the Jews could only light lamps before the Sabbath began (see Exod 35,3; *m.Shab* 2:7) and were not able to trim them later<sup>8</sup>. A

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<sup>6</sup> R.D. AUS, *The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus, and the Death, Burial and Translation of Moses in Judaic Tradition* (New York 2008) 230-252, adds a series of Jewish sources mentioning a “third day”.

<sup>7</sup> See M. STERN, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem 1974-1984) I, 432-437, with references and discussions, and II:110 for the confusion of Sabbath and Atonement Day.

<sup>8</sup> The Jewish custom of lighting lamps on Friday evening (before sunset) contains two major anomalies: firstly, it is a duty (חובה), not a precept (מצוה), and it lacks an associated blessing (*b.Shab* 23b); secondly, it is carried out by a woman, contrary to the usual principle that women are dispensed from obligations linked to a fixed time (*m.Shab* 2:6).

safe conclusion is that the Troas vigil was held in a Jewish house, but this fact is hardly relevant to the meaning of the episode, for it has been shaped into a kind of Eucharistic story: in the middle of the night, Eutychus falls down and dies in a way that parallels the breaking of the bread. This can be interpreted as a sign of death, but Paul says he is not dead. However, he is seen alive only at daybreak, after Paul's departure. So the sign of resurrection appears on the first day around sunrise. Thus, the story of Eutychus gives an illustration of the meaning of the Eucharist: the rite leads to a special dawn, which can be understood as the beginning of a new Creation, so that the lunar calendar reference loses any significance. In fact, instead of "lamps", the Western Text (WT) has ὑπολαμπάδες "high windows, skylights", a device useless by night, but meaningful if the group is waiting for dawn. A similar piece of evidence is given by the Younger Pliny in a letter to Trajan in 112 CE (*Ep.* 10.96): he writes that the sole crime to which the *christiani* admit is to meet for prayer on certain days, before dawn.

If the rite was a weekly custom, we should again invoke the rule already stated: if such an orderly feature is mentioned casually without a trace of discussion, it should be viewed as an established tradition. Of course, the institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper looks like an innovation, but the context would indicate that the rite is to be performed once a year, close to the Jewish Passover. This was indeed what the Quartodecimans did, but it does not account for a weekly rite on the first day of the week — the Lord's Day. Some links are missing.

In fact, the Synoptic stories of the institution display at least two notable features: firstly, they have the conciseness of a liturgical formula, in contrast to the context, where the disciples react and speak; secondly, there is no instruction to repeat it<sup>9</sup>. It was observed, many years ago<sup>10</sup>, that the material rite itself must have ex-

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<sup>9</sup> So Matt, Mark as well as Luke (WT), which does not have the words over the wine, in keeping with the mere "breaking of the bread" elsewhere in Luke-Acts. There are grounds to surmise that the longer form of the usual Luke, which includes the repetition order, has been harmonized with 1 Cor 11.

<sup>10</sup> Already E. RENAN in his *Life of Jesus* (French original, 1860). A. SCHWEITZER, *The Lord's Supper in Relation to the life of Jesus and the History of the Early Church* (ed. J. REUMANN) (Macon, GA 1982), observes

isted previously and that Jesus' innovation was to utter a new meaning. Taking all this into account leads us to the conclusion that the institution was introduced into the Last Supper from elsewhere. Some tiny traces of such a rite can be found: at the end of the Sabbath, after sunset, the traditional (Rabbinic) Jewish rite includes the lighting of a torch and a blessing calling for "much bread and new wine" (דגן ותיירוש). By the Essenes, the Pentecostal rite with the first-fruits (a small quantity) of bread and wine can be observed at every meal where there are ten present (1QS 6:4-5)<sup>11</sup>.

So at least two of the discrepancies mentioned above do not pose any more problems: firstly, in the Last Supper, the institution (bread and wine) has no material link with the signs of Passover (lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread). Secondly, the difference between the Biblical "third day" or "three days" and the Gospel chronology of Jesus' death and resurrection can be put into perspective: Jesus was crucified on a Friday, and the memorial rite of his return to life is carried out every Sunday morning around daybreak or sunrise. It is the performance of this rite that prompted the location of the resurrection stories around that time, and not the other way round, by some reworking of traditional reports, most probably from various eyewitnesses. It has indeed been recognized that the resurrection stories are independent of the passion narratives. In fact, this is implied by Paul's saying: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11,26). Performing the rite is a proclamation that he is living.

The Gospels give several accounts of the apparitions of the Risen One, many of which offer some calendrical clues. In John 20,1-29, the sequence of events includes: "on the first day of the week", the visit of Mary Magdalene, then of Peter and the "beloved disciple" (v. 1-10); an apparition to Mary and her report to the disciples (v. 11-18); then, an apparition to the disciples

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that Mark's account is the most authentic and concludes that the rendezvous with the apostles is purely eschatological; similarly to the commentary on 1 Cor 11,26.

<sup>11</sup> At the three Sabbath meals, the Jewish custom is still to say a *kidush* over a cup of wine, along with the breaking of bread (*b.Ber* 47a and *b.Shab* 117b).

(v. 19-23). The last section is introduced with a chronological indication: "So (οὕτως) on the evening of that day, the first day of the week." It has been supposed that this is an editorial reworking<sup>12</sup>, whose purpose was to show that a private apparition was followed by another to the disciples, as we read in 1 Cor 15,5; this is similar to the presentation in the Synoptics (women, the disciples). In the same way, Luke 24,36 describes an apparition to the disciples with a word of peace. Indeed, the introductory sentence of John is cumbersome, and the particle οὕτως indicates that the main narrative resumes after a digression<sup>13</sup>. Now, if we introduce the lunar calendar of that Gospel, we obtain the reverse order: the "evening of the first day of the week" falls on Saturday evening after sunset, before the events that occurred by daylight. Some aspects of the story suggest a liturgical meeting, especially the presence of the Risen One, and all the more because it is repeated the following week<sup>14</sup>. All this is very close to the rite of the Troas episode. Thus, John 20,1-29 has compiled together traditional materials and sought to reduce inconsistencies, one of them being the mention of a definite interval of "three days" (John 2,19).

A similar reasoning applies to the Eucharist at Emmaus, which took place "toward evening". The story begins with "that very day" (Luke 24,13), which is the first day of the week. In the solar calendar lying in the background of this Gospel, as we have seen, all the events occur on Sunday afternoon and evening. But if we translate this into the lunar chronology, we again find the rite on Saturday evening, after sunset. So the original event, which certainly happened on a Saturday, has been reworked. Incidentally, the short parallel account of Mark 16,12 does not suggest that it took place immediately after Jesus' death.

In conclusion, all the clues converge towards a weekly rite of bread and wine taken in small quantity between Saturday evening

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<sup>12</sup> See R. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA 1971) 689.

<sup>13</sup> See R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (xiii-xxi)* (AB 29A; New York 1970) 1019-1020.

<sup>14</sup> See J. ZUMSTEIN, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (13-21)* (Genève 2007) 283.

and Sunday morning. As for Jesus' last week, this is consistent with a last Passover on Tuesday evening, three days later, with unleavened bread.

But one major problem remains. In 1 Cor 11,23, Paul says: "The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was delivered took bread ...". Even if we admit that he was arrested some days before his crucifixion, we arrive at a twofold contradiction: if he was eating the Passover meal that night, the rite must have been carried out with unleavened bread, and this contradicts subsequent testimonies; if he performed the rite "on the first day", the disciples could not have been with him for his last Passover. The tradition of a rite in jail, as mentioned previously, cannot be taken seriously, but it underlines the problem.

A sloppy solution could be to maintain that Paul is not interested in chronological accuracy, but this would be quite unsatisfactory, for he is the most ancient witness and he transmits what he has received, and not his own words. However, Josephus' testimony allows us to consider the problem from another angle and to resolve a pending issue<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Since it involves the Slavonic version of the *War*, which is not well known, a preliminary introduction is necessary. For a statement on the genuineness of the Slavonic version as reflecting a first edition by the author, see Appendix II in É. NODÉ, *The Historical Jesus? Necessity and Limits of an Inquiry* (New York 2008). Here are the main arguments: (1) In the prologue of the *War*, a work that received Emperor Titus' official *imprimatur*, Josephus states he first wrote it in Aramaic, then translated it into Greek; later, in *Ag. Ap.* 1:50, he confessed to have been aided in Rome by "some assistants for the sake of the Greek", meaning that he had to provide them with a Greek draft. (2) In *Life* § 360-365, he says he sent this draft to friends for comments, which amounts to a small-scale publication before the assistants' help; so there were (at least) two forms of the Greek version, and the first one should have disappeared, but some copies can conceivably have survived in private libraries. (3) A Slavonic (Old Russian) version, translated from the Greek, was discovered in 1866; it is much shorter than the usual Greek, has a much more Jewish color, but displays some unexpected additions: two sections about Herod the Great's would-be messiahship, and others on two unnamed characters, a wild man and a wonderworker, who can be recognized as John the Baptist (under King Archelaus, see Matt 3,1) and Jesus (under Pilate, one generation later). (4) Numerous Greek works were meticulously translated into Slavonic in the x<sup>th</sup> or xi<sup>th</sup> century, with the aim of building a Christian library; they were sent from Constantinople, in the footsteps of the mission of Cyril and Methodius in the ix<sup>th</sup> century, sponsored by Patriarch Photius of Constantinople; the latter's



### 3. *Josephus and the Two "Trials" of Jesus*

Here is an excerpt of the report on a wonderworker (Jesus) in the Slavonic *War* (after 2:174, during Pilate's tenure):

At that time there appeared a man, if it is allowed to call him a man<sup>16</sup> [...]. He was accustomed to stay preferably opposite the city, on the Mount of Olives. It was there that he dispensed cures to the people. And close to him there gathered one hundred and fifty servants, and from among the people a great number. Observing his power, and seeing that he accomplished all that he wished by his word, they asked him to enter the city, to massacre the Roman troops and Pilate, and to reign over them. But he paid no attention to this. Later, the leaders of the Jews became aware of this; they came together with the High Priest and said: "We are powerless and weak to resist the Romans, (who are) like a bent bow. Let us go to tell Pilate what we have heard, and we will have no worries<sup>17</sup>. If ever he learns this from others, we will be deprived of our possessions, we will be cut into pieces ourselves and our children dispersed in exile." They went to tell Pilate.

He sent some men, and killed many among the people and brought back this wonderworker. He held an enquiry about him, and knew that he did good and not evil, that he was neither a rebel, nor one aspiring to royalty, and released him, since he had cured his wife who was dying.

And, having come to the usual place, he performed the usual works. And again, as a greater number of people gathered round him, he was celebrated for his works over all. The doctors of the Law were upset out of envy, and they gave thirty talents to Pilate so that he would kill him. He took these and gave them authorization to carry out themselves their wish<sup>18</sup>. They seized him and crucified him, in spite of the law of the ancestors<sup>19</sup>.

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*Library* contains some evidence that he knew of the Greek source of the Slavonic *War*. (5) As for the content of this version, some details are supported by external documents; for instance, in the notice on the Essenes in *War* 2:128, it adds that they get up by night to pray, as we find in IQS 6:7-8); in 2:147, it adds that they have a cycle of Pentecosts, as in some Qumran documents.

<sup>16</sup> The *testimonium flavianum* begins with the same sentence (*Ant.* 18:63).

<sup>17</sup> This was Caiaphas' proposal according to John 11,48-50.

<sup>18</sup> Passover is not mentioned, but the fact that Pilate was in Jerusalem implies a pilgrimage period (see *War* 2:224).

<sup>19</sup> See *b.Sanh* 43a.

<i>War</i> (Slavonic)	Synoptics	John
Mob of servants Jesus is denounced out of fear of the Romans	— —	6,15 to make him king 11,50 "It is better that one man dies" (Caia- phas)
Arrest (fights)	Judas. Armed resistance (Sanhedrin)	Judas. Peter has a sword (before Annas)
Before Pilate	Deliberation then trans- fer before Pilate	Caia- phas does not see Jesus Praetorium. Pilate
No charge against Jesus	"Are you the king of the Jews – You said it" Pilate ignores any political charge	
Superstition of Pilate, for Jesus has aided his wife	Matt 27,19 the dream of Pilate's wife	(Fear of Pilate)
Jesus at the usual place: Mount of Olives	—	Flagellation. <i>Ecce homo</i> Usual place: a garden across the Kidron valley
Jealousy of the doctors	Pilate knew of the jeal- ousy (Centurion facing the cross: he was "son of God")	Son of God (Pilate's fear) Pavement – Gab- batha
	Pilate accepts political charge Barabbas freed	
Corruption of Pilate	(Corruption of Judas)	—
Crucifixion by the Jews	The Jews demand	Jesus' crucifixion
Trilingual inscription: "Jesus, the king who never reigned"	<i>Titulus</i> (short) "King of the Jews"	<i>Titulus</i> (trilingual) "Jesus the Nazorean, King of the Jews"
	Golgotha "skull" (compare "Capitol")	

Table 1. — Trials of Jesus before Pilate.

N.B.: In this table, some details are added. The phrase "son of God" was meaningful for the Romans: both Suetonius (*Augustus* § 94) and Dio Cassius (45.1.2) report a tradition that after his divinization Augustus was thought to be a god's son (born without a father). This sheds light on Pilate's fear (John 19,8), gives context to the very name Golgotha (parallel to "Capitol", the symbol of Rome's power), and explains the recognition of the "true son of God" by a Roman soldier, whereas in the Bible such an attribute is not specific (see John 10,34-35).

The source of this story may have been an account of the eye-witnesses mentioned in Luke 1,1. Some details find echoes in the Synoptics (mainly Matt), and many more in John, but the passage can hardly be a Christian interpolation, for at least two reasons: firstly, there is no connection between the wonderworker and the wild man (John the Baptist), whose deeds are reported one generation before, under Archelaus; secondly, it attributes to Jesus neither any title, nor any fulfillment of Scripture. He is unnamed, most probably out of magic fear, for the Slavonic later adds an account on his Jewish disciples (after *War* 2:221), who perform healings and say that their master is still alive; in other words, his name had a certain power.

For the purposes of the present study, we see two stages in the trial of Jesus before Pilate according to this version: the first one results from a plot between the leaders and the high priest, out of fear of Roman repression, and is akin to the suggestion of Caiaphas in John 11,50; then Jesus is unexpectedly released. This corresponds to Judas' "betrayal" (delivery), followed by a trial in Pilate's *praetorium* (John 18,28-19,1), which ends with a scourging.

The second phase or second trial finishes with the crucifixion, as if it were a Roman sentence — a detail stressed in John 18,31-32 without any mention of bribery. For Josephus, the two stages are separated by several days. For John, they follow one another in different places on the same day, an unlikely proceeding.

This twofold trial offers a possible solution for Paul's "the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was handed over, took bread" (1 Cor 11,23). The institution would have taken place on a Saturday evening, after Caiaphas' denunciation and before Jesus' arrest by night, but this was "not during the feast", in order to avoid dangerous disturbances<sup>20</sup>. However, the scheme was spoiled, because Pilate released him the following day (Sunday).

Combining this starting point with a "solar Passover" on Wednesday and the crucifixion on Friday, it is possible to build a tentative outline of Jesus' last week:

- Saturday evening: possibly at Bethany after the anointing, the rite of bread and wine, with similarities to the Eucharistic rite. Judas is provoked.

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<sup>20</sup> See W. KLASSEN, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis, MN 1996).

- Arrest that night by soldiers and Jewish officers, led by Judas.
- Sunday: Pilate releases Jesus, who then returns to the usual place.
- Monday (“the following day” in John 12,12): crowds of pilgrims arrive and greet Jesus as “King of Israel”, the very development that Judas and the Jewish rulers wanted to avoid.
- Tuesday evening: Jesus’ Passover in Jerusalem, which includes the following day.
- Wednesday or Thursday: second arrest of Jesus, maybe Thursday evening, following the Johannine chronology.
- Friday afternoon: crucifixion at the time of the slaughtering of the lambs (just before the start of the feast, the worst time).

Of course, such a hypothesis misses the most important point: if the events were scattered over one week (or more, as Josephus would suggest), we have to explain why the actual Gospel narratives concentrate everything within the final 24 hours. Or, to put it another way, what can we say about the literary formation of these pieces, especially in the case of the Synoptics?

The following section collects some testimonies indicating that, in the II<sup>nd</sup> century (before Irenaeus), the final form and authority of the canonical Gospels emerged slowly. As for the Passion stories, it has been suggested that they were free developments of the central faith tenets of the early church (death and Resurrection, e.g., Mark 10,32-34), reported in a kind of *aggadic* way within a certain frame. The suggestion of a frame may be useful, but the idea of free development is unsatisfactory, because what appears is a forced concentration of many pieces of literary material, narrative as well as ritual.

#### 4. *Hesitations in the II<sup>nd</sup> Century*

Besides the calendrical confusions, there are other accounts which are related to the Passion narratives, but in a way which shows some redactional activity.

A collection of ancient traditions, entitled *Chronicon paschale*, includes a fragment by bishop Apollinarius of Hierapolis, who around 165 CE fumed against the ignoramuses who caused quarrels by saying; “On the 14<sup>th</sup> the Lord ate the lamb with his disciples and

then suffered on the great day of Unleavened Bread. They argue that Matthew supports what they say, but their view runs against the law and introduces a contradiction within the Gospels.” He adds: “The true Passover of the Lord is when the son of God replaced the lamb” (PG 90.80). Both the ignoramuses and Apollinarius could admittedly have extracted opposite arguments from Matt as we know it, for according to Matt 26,19-20 the disciples did prepare the lamb, but it is not said that it was eaten during the Last Supper. However, Luke 22,15 would have provided a definite proof that they did eat it. So Apollinarius, who follows here the Johannine chronology, never considered Luke. He may have known of the canonical Matt, but even this is somewhat doubtful, for elsewhere he quotes a passage written by Papias of Hierapolis<sup>21</sup> — probably one of his teachers —, in which the account of Judas’ death cannot be reconciled with the NT stories (Matt 27,3-5; Acts 1,18). Thus, another form of the Matthean Passion was known at Hierapolis in the II<sup>nd</sup> century. Its authority was challenged by a newer canonical Matt, and probably much more by Luke.

The same *Chronicon* has a fragment by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215 CE) which leads to the same conclusion:

On that day of the 13<sup>th</sup> [the disciples] ask him: “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover (see Matt 26,17). So on that day they used to make the sanctification of the Unleavened Bread and the preparation of the feast. Our Lord suffered on the following day, which was the Passover offered by the Jews [...]. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the princes of the priests brought him before Pilate, but they did not enter the praetorium so that they might not be defiled and could eat the Passover in the evening (see John 18,28). About the exactness of the day, all the Scriptures and Gospels agree.

The calendrical reference is clear and Clement knows something of the canonical Gospels, but the wording implies that he wants to settle a dispute, probably the same as the one that arose in Hierapolis. His solution is that the disciples prepared the lamb for the following day, with the result that Jesus did not actually eat it. This is not strictly impossible if one relies upon Matt only. Of course, such an explanation makes no sense from a Jewish point of view. About other matters, Eusebius tells us (*Hist. eccl.* 4.26.4) that Clement used a lost work written by Melito of Sardis, a Quartodeciman who lived at the

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<sup>21</sup> See E. NORELLI, *Papia di Hierapolis*. Esposizione dei oracoli del Signore. I fragmenti (Milano 2005) 336-350.

same time as Apollinarius, and we can speculate that Melito may have stressed the exclusive importance of the lunar calendar of the Temple, with Passover on the following day. In any case, it is remarkable that the problems caused by the Synoptic chronology appeared at such a late stage.

Some years previously, ca. 150 CE, we have Justin Martyr's testimony. He explains to Trypho (*Dialogue* 111:3): "On that day of Passover you seized him, and also in the Passover you crucified him." This phrasing hides the contradiction, for it combines both calendars by playing on "Passover", the feast and the lamb: the first part recalls the Synoptics, but the second part links the crucifixion with the slaughtering of the lambs, before the feast itself. We saw above that he insists on the symbolism of the Paschal lamb, but with a peculiar chronology: the slaughtering of the lamb is done in the middle of the Passover day. This is impossible, but Justin, who hardly lets Trypho expound his own views, is not interested in Jewish rituals. He focuses on the fulfilment of Scripture. For him, Jesus' Passover culminates with the cross. Elsewhere, Justin describes the Eucharist according to the tradition (*Apology* I:66): "For the apostles, in the *Memoirs* composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread and, when He had given thanks, said, 'Do this in remembrance of me, this is my body' etc". Despite a reference to the Gospels<sup>22</sup>, the instruction to repeat the rite comes without any allusion to the Passover, since for him the rite is to be performed weekly, but not anymore within an *agape* meal<sup>23</sup>. These two aspects are close to Paul's formulation more than to that of the Synoptics'.

Let us examine another aspect related to the evolution of the canonical Gospels in the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>24</sup>. For a long time, it has been observed that the Gospels contain very few allusions to the war of 70 CE. According to a classical view, this is because they had been com-

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<sup>22</sup> Justin may have used a Gospel harmony, combining early stages of the Gospels, see M.-É. BOISMARD – A. LAMOUILLE, *Le Diatessaron. De Tatien à Justin* (Paris 1992); D. BARTHÉLEMY, "Justin et le texte de la Bible", *Justin Martyr. Oeuvres complètes* (Paris 1994) 368-375.

<sup>23</sup> See G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London 1945) 98-102.

<sup>24</sup> See E. NORELLI, "Papias de Hiérapolis a-t-il utilisé un recueil canonique des quatre évangiles?", *Le canon du Nouveau Testament. Regards nouveaux sur l'histoire de sa formation* (eds. G. ARAGIONE *et al.*) (Genève 2005) 35-56.

pleted beforehand. However, leaving aside the findings presented so far, this argument is shaky, as can be shown from the works of Josephus. The first title is *The War of the Jews* (or formerly *The Capture of Jerusalem*), and the content spans from the Maccabean crisis until the fall of Masada in 74 CE, Vespasian's temple of Peace in 75, and the destruction of the Onias temple in Egypt soon afterwards. But in the *Antiquities*, published in 93 CE, his scope is different: this "History of the Jews" begins with a paraphrase of the Bible from Genesis, and ends in 66, just before the events which led to the war. In his autobiography, an appendix to the *Antiquities*, he exposes at length his credentials as a Jewish leader, with only a casual allusion to the victory of Titus in Judea in 70 (*Life* § 422). So, after some 25 years, the destruction was not a major issue any more. In *Against Apion*, published two or three years later, Josephus writes that the priestly archives in Jerusalem had been restored, as after the previous wars (*Ag. Ap.* 1:34), and that sacrifices were still being offered for the emperor (2:77). Indeed, something of the Temple had survived until the Bar Kokhba war (132-135) and the founding of Aelia Capitolina<sup>25</sup>.

According to the Synoptics (Matt 24,3 and par.), Jesus foretells the ruin of the Temple to the disciples: "There will not be left here one stone upon another." In Luke 19,41-44, he weeps over Jerusalem, but with many Biblical allusions to the ruin of 587 BCE<sup>26</sup>. These passages hardly refer to the war in 70 CE, for at that time Jerusalem was not wiped out.

In Matt 24,15-16 (and par.), Jesus foretells the fulfillment of the prophecy of Dan 9,27 (Greek): "And in the Temple will be the 'desolating sacrilege'". The original reference is to the defilement of the Temple in 167 BCE, when Antiochus Epiphanes ordered a monthly sacrifice on his own behalf.

The Synoptics do not have a unified presentation (table 2). Matt and Mark are close to the prophecy. Two situations of major defilement are possible. Firstly, the attempt by Caligula around 40 CE, to have his statue set up in the Temple, but the project, which elicited universal opposition from the Jews, was interrupted by his death. The second situation was created by Hadrian's policy to transform Jeru-

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<sup>25</sup> See NODET – TAYLOR, *Origins of Christianity*, 173-177.

<sup>26</sup> See C.H. DODD, "The Fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation'", *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester 1968) 69-83.

saalem into a “civilized” Greco-Roman city, with *forum* and capitol. As a result, Bar Kokhba launched his rebellion and created a Jewish state, even minting special coins. Some Jews believed that he was the Messiah. With this event, the prophecy in the Synoptics fits particularly well<sup>27</sup>, including Jesus’ warning to beware of false messiahs and prophets (Matt 24,23-26). Incidentally, it should be noted that for the allusions to, and quotations of, Daniel, Matthew and Mark, unlike Luke, use Theodotion’s translation, made in the II<sup>nd</sup> century and very close to the MT, a rabbinic edition<sup>28</sup>.

On the contrary, the Lukan version cannot refer to the Bar Kokhba war, even if the Romans did worship their signs within the Temple court (*War* 6:316), but according to what we know from Josephus, and from the emigration of Jewish Christians to Pella (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.3)<sup>29</sup>, it may well allude to the first rebellion in 70 CE (with some echo of Jer 25,15). It may be a major reworking of the parallel account alluding to Daniel, for the only common sentence (in italics in Table 2) disturbs the narrative flow and seems to be unrelated. The *Sibylline Oracles* gives a clue to the war in 70 CE (4:125-127): “A Roman ruler will come to Syria (meaning *Syria palaestina*). He will burn the temple of Jerusalem and kill many people”. The Matthean version of the parable of the guests who refuse to come to the wedding feast (22,1-14) has an insertion to the same effect: between the guests who refuse to come and the sending of the servants into the streets in order to invite anyone, vv. 6-7 add that the servants are mistreated, so that the king in anger “sends his troops who destroy these murderers and burn their city”.

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<sup>27</sup> See J.A.T. ROBINSON, *Redating the New Testament* (London 1976) 16-20, who aptly criticizes HARNACK’s views, in spite of their broad acceptance.

<sup>28</sup> See M.-É. BOISMARD, “L’Ancien Testament grec dans l’Évangile de Matthieu: LXX ou Théodotion?”, *Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. J. KRASOVEC) (Ljubljana 1998) 245-254.

<sup>29</sup> According to J. VERHEYDEN, *De vlucht van de christenen naar Pella* (Brussel 1988) 241-244 (English summary). Eusebius wanted to show that, unlike the Jews, the Christians experienced a return, which obviously presupposes a previous flight. He speaks of a Hebrew (Nazorean) Church of Jerusalem between 70 and 135 CE (4.5.2-4); see A. SCHLATTER, *Die Kirche Jerusalem von 70-130* (Gütersloh 1898).



Matt 24,15-16	Mark 13,14	Luke 21,20-22
<p>15 When you see the “desolating sacrilege”- spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place</p> <p>let the reader understand, 16 <i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</i></p>	<p>14 When you see the “desolating sacrilege”</p> <p>standing where it ought not to be, let the reader understand; <i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains</i></p>	<p>20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near</p> <p>21 <i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,</i></p> <p>and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it. 22 For these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.</p>

Table 2. — Foretelling the ruin.

It is noteworthy that Marcion (ca. 85-160) omits most of the passages quoted here: Luke 19,29-46 (Jesus' messianic entry; his weeping over Jerusalem and the cleansing the Temple) as well as 19,21-22. Consistent with his dating of the canonical form of the Gospels to the 1<sup>st</sup> cent., Harnack followed Tertullian and Epiphanius in asserting that these and many other passages were purposeful suppressions<sup>30</sup>. But since no addition or “sectarian” reworking have been detected, it may well be that Marcion's Lukan version was just an early stage of that Gospel<sup>31</sup>.

## II. The Christianized Passover as a Gate to the Kingdom

The last problem to deal with is the most important. Why did the Gospels condense so many events into a single day, while a

<sup>30</sup> See A. von HARNACK, *Marcion. Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig 1921) 208\*-213\*.

<sup>31</sup> See M. KLINGHARDT, “‘Gesetz’ bei Markion und Lukas”, *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament. Festschrift für Christoph Burchard* (eds. D. SÄNGER – M. KONRADT) (NTOA 57; Göttingen 2006) 99-128.

significant number of historical and ritual issues stand against such a device?

The question will be considered under two titles: Paul's authority and the pattern of Joshua's Passover on entering Canaan.

### 1. *Paul's Authority and the First Paschal Controversy*

When he criticizes some disorder in the community meals, Paul accepts that the Eucharistic rite is performed in the context of a meal. Then he recalls the tradition he has received "from the Lord" (1 Cor 11,23-25). The rite proclaims Jesus' death, it was established on the night when he was handed over and it takes place during a meal. The style is so concise that its details may allow for some flexibility of interpretation: "handed over" may be close to "judged and put to death". Moreover, Christ is "our Passover" (1 Cor 5,7). In this shortened form, a frame emerges: the rite, within a meal, announces the imminent death of Christ, "our Passover". With a play on the two meanings of "Passover" (lamb, feast), the result is a kind of Christianized Passover, beginning with the rite after sunset and culminating with the crucifixion and burial before the next sunset. This matches Justin's testimony except for the meal, since in his time the rite had been separated from the *agape* meal. This, too, is the outline of the Passion narratives in the Synoptics, to which traditional materials have been added with minor changes.

However, we should not be content with such a logical puzzle. It is necessary to look for customs or rites which could have guided such a composition. In this respect, Eusebius reports (*HE* 5.23-24) a memorable controversy about the Paschal fast, around 191 CE: the Quartodecimans of the Churches of Minor Asia celebrated the Passover of the Lord on 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan, the day when the lamb was slaughtered; so they stopped fasting on that day. But in all other churches, the fast continued until the day of the resurrection, the Sunday. The Quartodeciman camp, led by Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, defended this tradition as apostolic, on the authority of John and Philip, as well as that of Polycarp of Smyrna. The spokesman for the opposite camp, which was in the majority, was Victor, bishop of Rome, but he had no argument to offer except his own authority. He probably would have excommuni-

cated the others, if Irenaeus had not intervened, reminding him that at Rome, before Pope Soter (167-174), "among others, the presbyters who presided over the church which you presently direct [...] did not celebrate [the feast] and did not allow their faithful to celebrate it [...]. Nevertheless, they remained at peace with those who came from other churches where it was celebrated". Other documents of the time<sup>32</sup>, especially Paschal homilies, show that both parties had the same view of Easter as the salvation feast of the human race<sup>33</sup>.

Some commentators were not prepared to accept a Christianity without Easter-Passover (Πάσχα)<sup>34</sup>. But this fits what has been said previously about the account of the Last Supper in the Synoptics. Furthermore, Justin's testimony is significant: he gives a detailed picture of Christian life at Rome in his own time (around 150 CE), but he never makes any kind of reference to Easter when he speaks of the Eucharist and the Lord's day (*Apol.* I:65-67); conversely, when he discusses the Paschal lamb with Tryphon, there is no hint of an analogous Christian custom.

A clear conclusion emerges: the Easter Sunday custom defended by Victor was actually a novelty, whereas the weekly Lord's Day worship is apparent from the very beginning as the first day of a new Creation (see *Ep. of Barnabas* 15:9). As for the

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<sup>32</sup> See M. RICHARD, "La question pascale au II<sup>e</sup> siècle", *L'Orient syrien* 6 (1961) 179-212.

<sup>33</sup> The First Council of Nicaea (325) has fixed a general usage opposed to the Quartodecimans (at least for the fast), see W.L. PETERSEN, "Eusebius and the Paschal Controversy", *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (eds. H.W. ATTRIDGE – G. HATA) (SPB 42; Leiden 1992) 311-325.

<sup>34</sup> See S.G. HALL, "The Origins of Easter", *Studia Patristica XV* (TUGAL 128; Berlin 1984) I, 554-567, who conjectures that from the very beginning a Quartodeciman Passover was celebrated at Rome, and that Easter on Sunday would have been enforced by Soter, following a widespread usage. B. LOURIÉ, "Les quatre jours 'de l'intervalle': une modification néotestamentaire et chrétienne du calendrier de 364 jours", *L'Église des deux Alliances. Mémoires Annie Jaubert* (1912-1980) (eds. M. PETIT *et al.*) (Piscataway, NJ 2008) 103-134, accepts Tuesday evening for Jesus' last Passover, and surmises that from the very beginning the day of his resurrection (starting on Saturday evening) was called Πάσχα; observing that the latter fell four days after the former, he introduces the four-day interval mentioned in 1 Enoch 75:1, supposed to be the "correction" of the solar year (see § I.2 above). These two far-fetched views go well beyond the available data.

circumstances giving rise to such a novelty, Epiphanius may provide a clue. Born in Palestine and aware of its manifold traditions, he tells us that the discussions about the date of Passover-Easter had begun in 135 CE, after the expulsion of the circumcised from Judea, including the Nazoreans and their bishops, the successors of James (*Panarion* 70.9-10). At that time, the diocese of Caesarea absorbed the Aelia Capitolina district. So we can speculate that some of these Nazoreans merged there with Christians and started to give some prominence to the specific Lord's Day following the days of Unleavened Bread, i.e. the Passover feast as a whole, and that this new custom was deemed to be meaningful, so that in due course it spread everywhere, from harbor city to harbor city. Such a hypothesis would explain the hybrid character of the ancient Christian calendar, as noted by A. Jaubert.

These short remarks will suffice here, for the result of the inquiry is negative. The late introduction of the Easter Sunday celebration indicates that there was no liturgical framework in place that could have guided the Passion narratives in the Synoptics. A different conclusion could be ventured for Pentecost, because the Ascension and Pentecost narrative of Acts 1-2 duplicates the short account of Luke 24,49-51 and inserts it into a chronological and liturgical frame that starts from the day of the Resurrection. The feast is mentioned casually as a supposedly obvious chronological reference in Acts 20,16 (Jerusalem) and 1 Cor 16,8 (Ephesus), but the fact that it had a meaning for the Corinthians — and the Ephesians — may be significant. A custom of not kneeling down on that day, notably by the time of persecution mentioned in *Acta Pauli* (fr. 7) and in a lost work of Irenaeus (*Fr. deperditorum operum* § 7), is interesting, albeit poorly witnessed. Anyhow, no discussion about Pentecost is to be found in works by the early Christian writers. So, according to the rule on undiscussed “new” customs, one can conjecture that it had always been celebrated on a Sunday, which could have helped in giving some prominence to the Sunday of the Resurrection, seven weeks before, but cannot properly explain the very name Πάσχα.

Thus, it appears that Paul's authority has been strong enough to give shape to the Passion stories. Two steps may have been involved: first, the introduction of Jesus' Passover meal at the very beginning of the day of the crucifixion, making it a Christianized Passover. This corresponds to the presentation of Justin, who

Matt 26	Mark 14	Luke 22	1 Cor 11
(Passover meal)			(23) The Lord Jesus, the night he was handed over,
(26) Now, while they were eating, Jesus, taking bread and blessing broke (it) and giving (it) to his disciples, said: Take, eat this is my body	22) And while they were eating, taking bread, blessing, he broke (it) and gave (it) to them and said: Take, this is my body.	(19) And taking bread, he gave thanks, he broke (it) and gave (it) to them, saying: This is my body, given for you. Do this in memory of me.	took bread, (24) and, giving thanks broke (it)
(27) And taking a cup	(23) And taking a cup,	(20) And the cup likewise after the meal,	and said:
and giving thanks he gave (it) to them, saying: Drink of it all, (28) For this is my <i>Covenant blood</i> ,	giving thanks he gave (it) to them, and they all drank it. (24) And he said: This is my <i>Covenant blood</i>	<b>[Omitted by WT]</b> saying: This cup (is) <i>the new Covenant</i> in my blood,	This is my body, for you. Do this in memory of me. (25) And likewise the cup after the meal,
which is shed for many, in remission of sins.	which is shed for many.	which is shed for you.	saying: This cup is <i>the new Covenant</i> in my blood.
This, do it, each time that you drink, in memory of me. (26) For, each time that you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.			

Table 3. — The Eucharistic Institution.

Note on Table 3.

A feature common to all three Synoptics is the liturgical conciseness of the passage. Contrary to the context, there is no dialogue and the disciples do not react, in spite of the strangeness of Jesus' saying, whereas in John 6,60-61 his followers are scandalized by similar words. The forms given in Matt and Mark may reflect a tradition parallel to 1 Cor, but the common reference to the Covenant underlines the fulfillment of Scripture, be it the "new Covenant" of Jer 31,31 (Luke and 1 Cor) or the "blood of the Covenant" linked to the Sinai revelation according to Exod 24,8 (Matt and Mark; see Heb 9,20). The latter have an introduction "and as they were eating", which repeats the introduction to the previous dialogue (Matt 26,23 and Mark 14,18), and establishes the context as a meal.

ignores any link with the Eucharist; such was also the case in the *Memoirs of the Apostles* he quoted from. The second step was the introduction of the institution account into each Gospel. Table 3 shows the similarities and differences between these accounts.

But again, such a degree of manipulation may seem arbitrary. A *rationale* is missing.

The Lukan version is close to 1 Cor, especially in the *textus receptus*, while the omission of the WT is in keeping with the broad context of Luke-Acts, where only the breaking of the bread is mentioned. As for choosing which text is earlier, there is one argument favoring the WT: the instruction to repeat the rite is missing in Matt, Mark and Luke WT, which makes sense, for the Easter context is not to be repeated. The instruction is given in 1 Cor, which poses no problem, for there is no Passover context. In the usual version of Luke, the instruction would imply the use of unleavened bread, as at Passover<sup>35</sup>.

## 2. Joshua's Gilgal Passover and the Last Supper

An external observation suggests a correspondence between the Passover of entry into the Promised Land, celebrated at Gilgal by Joshua and the twelve tribes, and the Last Supper of the Synoptics, which combines two basic elements, a Passover meal and a rite of bread and wine.

A similar observation can be made in the fourth Gospel. According to John 6,4 "Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand", and in the story of the multiplication of the loaves which follow, two details differ from the Synoptic version: there is no "breaking of the bread", and the lad brings along five barley loaves (John 6,9). Lev 23,10 states that among the rites to be performed for Passover is the waving of a barley sheaf as a first-fruit offering. In the context of John 6,9, the loaves of the lad are a kind of first-fruits, from which the whole multitude will be fed. Later, in his speech, Jesus draws a contrast between the manna in the wilderness, which led to death (v. 49), and "eating his flesh and drinking his blood", which gives eternal life, i.e. entry into

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<sup>35</sup> See N. WILKINSON DURAN, *The Power of Disorder*. Ritual Elements in Mark's Passion Narrative (JSNTSup 378; London 2008) 55-76.

the Kingdom of God (v. 54). So the context is Passover and the themes presented are: eating some produce of the Promised Land (barley), with a failure to understand (v. 26); the manna, and Jesus as food.

Now at the time of the first Passover in Egypt, the Israelites were ordered to perform the same rites as soon as they entered Canaan (Exod 12,25). According to Jos 5,10-12, the precept was indeed fulfilled: after the capture of Jericho, the Israelites arrived at Gilgal, where they were circumcised — as a renewal of the Covenant — and celebrated Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month. The details given are significant: on the next day, the manna ceased and they ate the produce of the land. If we compare the entry into Canaan with the entry into the Kingdom, and the contrast drawn by Jesus between the ancient manna and himself as the produce of the Kingdom to be consumed, the reference to an “arrival Passover” becomes obvious, supported by his refusal of an earthly kingship<sup>36</sup>. As in John 6, we find all the themes in Jos 5 put together into a kind of icon, since we can hardly imagine that the produce of the land was ripe and available at that time, especially since Lev 19,23-25 prescribes a delay of several years before consuming the produce of new plantations.

One theme is missing in Jos 5: the first-fruits of the produce of the land. However, it is presented in John 6, in the form of the barley loaves. But Jesus refuses an earthly kingdom in the land of Israel, and he puts himself forward as the replacement for the barley in another kingdom (see John 18,36). In this respect, his replacement of the earthly first-fruits is an indirect announcement of his death. In 1 Cor 15,20, Paul says that the risen Christ is “the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” In Rom 8,29, the Risen One is “the first-born among many brethren”.

All this brings us back to the Synoptic Last Supper: the two main components are Passover and a small quantity of bread and wine — as a sign of the first-fruits<sup>37</sup>, — becoming identified with Jesus himself. This is clearly understood by Irenaeus, born in the

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<sup>36</sup> A fuller statement is given by É. NODÉ, “De Josué à Jésus, *via* Qumrân et le ‘pain quotidien’”, *RB* 114 (2007) 208-236.

<sup>37</sup> Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.* 23:5 and 24:1, states that the gesture of breaking the bread must be done by the bishop, who is helped by deacons only for practical reasons, see DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 131-133.

East (*Adv. haer.* 4.17.4): “Telling his disciples to offer to God the first-fruits of his own Creation, [...] he took this bread issuing from Creation, and gave thanks, saying, etc”. Of course, the choice of bread and wine is not indifferent, for they represent the typical produce of the land, whose first-fruits are ritualized in one or more Pentecosts, as stated above. In other words, in the Eucharistic institution, the first-fruits of bread and wine, marking the entry into the Promised Land, are transformed into the first-fruits of the Kingdom of God, or in other words, into Jesus himself. The intended meaning points to the Risen One, beyond death.

Some concluding remarks on the Gospels can be made. If we omit the infancy narrative, the general outline of the Synoptics is the journey of Jesus from the Jordan River to Jerusalem, with a special Passover and a leap into the Kingdom. By comparing it with the story of Joshua, who has the same name, we see that Jerusalem replaces Gilgal as the ultimate location in the Promised Land. The fourth Gospel has a different scope: Jesus is a baptizer, like John; his journey runs from one Temple feast to another, and the allusions to Joshua are presented in a different way, including a major event at Sichem, which hints at Joshua’s farewell speech (see Jos 24,13 and John 4,36-38). The only problem with the Passion narrative is the twofold trial before Pilate, which results from a concentration of events within one day. Jesus’ washing the feet of the disciples is mandatory for those who wish to have a part in his Kingdom (John 13,8). So this rite implies a crossing of the water of death, at the border of the Kingdom; it may be remotely linked to the crossing of the Jordan river, at the border of the Promised Land.

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The general problem of the final formation of the Gospels, which is linked to their growing authority, is quite complex and poorly documented<sup>38</sup>. Concerning the Passion narratives, which of-

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<sup>38</sup> Broadly speaking, the testimonies of the early Fathers are difficult to use, see A. GREGORY – C. TUCKETT (eds.), *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford 2005).



fer a meaningful organization of the events of Jesus' last week, some results can be summarized.

During the II<sup>nd</sup> cent., the texts had not yet been finalized, and different versions were in use. The challenge presented by Marcion, especially in Rome, certainly prompted some movement towards authorized versions. This can be inferred from the anti-marcionite prefaces to the Gospels, which were known to Irenaeus<sup>39</sup>. The canonical Gospels were certainly circulated from Rome, but this does not mean that other, local versions were immediately discarded.

However, the Paschal quarrel shows that the actual liturgical customs were not instrumental in the formation of the Synoptic Passion narratives, since we find lasting traces of divergent usages<sup>40</sup>. They took their shape according to Paul's theological authority. The latter was poorly accepted in the Aramaic-speaking churches of Jewish Christian origin. This may explain the slow penetration of the canonical NT there.

Since the major studies of Th. Zahn and of A. Harnack in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41</sup>, almost all the relevant material has been known, but it is A. Jaubert's hypothesis, following the Qumran discoveries, that has opened new perspectives in two main respects: firstly, by confirming the greater historical accuracy of the fourth Gospel over the Synoptics; secondly, by differentiating between the Eucharistic rite and the Passover, thus paving the way for understanding the ecclesiastical process by which they were brought together in the Synoptics. Jesus can be viewed as a new Joshua ("YHWH saves"), of a different nature.

A number of implications emerge. The traces of the *Jubilees* calendar discernible in the Synoptics should not be viewed as casual decoration. They raise the question of an original link with the

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<sup>39</sup> See D. DE BRUYNE, "Les plus anciens prologues latins des évangiles", *RBén* 40 (1928) 193-214.

<sup>40</sup> Later on, the Gospels did influence the liturgical year, with commemorations of events reported in the Gospels, see G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 340-60.

<sup>41</sup> The former viewed the formation of the NT as a slow development linked with liturgical usage, the latter maintained that it was the result of decisions made by Church authorities, see C. MARKSCHIES, "Époques de la recherche sur le canon du Nouveau Testament en Allemagne", *Le canon du Nouveau Testament* (eds. G. ARAGIONE *et al.*) (Genève 2005) 11-34.

Essenes, for whom access to the Covenant was the goal of a baptismal pedagogy. The peculiarity of the Jewish colony of Bathyra (Golan) suggests the need for a reassessment of the Jewish nature of rural Galilee at the time of Jesus. However, the fourth Gospel indicates familiarity with a different milieu, one much more linked to the Temple and its calendar. Together with Josephus' testimony and some Qumran documents, this suggests that conferring upon Jesus with a divine rank could have been perfectly acceptable to the Jews at that time, unlike the views displayed later by Rabbinic tradition. This, in turn, may shed some light upon the formation of the Gospels, for the first Christians wanted to stress Jesus' humanity.

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#### SUMMARY

Five conclusions allow us to explain Jesus last days and to assess the significance of the actual Gospel narratives. Firstly, his last Passover meal (Synoptics, solar calendar) took place on one Tuesday evening; secondly, the origin of the Eucharistic rite on the Lord's day has nothing to do with Passover; thirdly, a feast of Passover-Easter (Πάσχα) on a specific Sunday emerged somewhat late in the II<sup>nd</sup> century; fourthly, before this date, the Synoptics did not have their final shape; fifthly Josephus provides us with a clue to understand Jesus' double trial before Pilate in the Passion narrative of John.

## **The Old Testament Background of the “Last Hour” in 1 John 2,18**

There is an apparent eschatological use of “hour” (ώρα) in 1 John 2,18: “children, it is the last hour [ἐσχάτη ὥρα] and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour [ἐσχάτη ὥρα]”. The purpose of this article is to propose a more specific background for “the last hour” in 1 John 2,18 than has been seen before<sup>1</sup>.

### **I. Previous Proposals for the Background of “the Last Hour”**

A number of commentators have observed that the general background for the “last hour” lies in the various uses of “latter day” terminology elsewhere in the Old Testament, early Judaism and Christianity, though they have not seen specific influence from any of these texts<sup>2</sup>. Others have seen the background to lie more specifically in John’s gospel. For example, Raymond E. Brown suggests that “it is not impossible that 1 John’s use of the ‘last hour’ is to be considered a specification of GJohn’s ‘last day’” or an equivalence of it, since “the resurrection of the dead in John 6,40 and 5,25 shows the equivalence of the last day with an ‘hour’ that ‘is coming’”<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the background for the expectation of the coming of the “antichrist” and “many antichrists” in 1 John

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revision of a paper delivered at the “Greek Bible” Section at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in November 2008.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., cf. Gen 49,1; Deut 31,29; Isa 2,2; Ezek 38,16; Mic 4,1; and especially Dan 2,28; 10,14; 1QS<sup>a</sup> 1,1; 1QpHab 2,5-6; 1 Pet 1,5; Ign. *Eph.* 11,1; Jude 18; Acts 2,17; 2 Tim 3,1; *Let. Barn.* 4,9. In this respect, see, e.g., H-J. KLAUCK, *Der erste Johannesbrief* (EKKNT 23/1; Zurich 1991) 147-48, and similarly R. E. BROWN, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; Garden City, NY 1982) 330-332, 365.

<sup>3</sup> Among others, see BROWN, *Epistles*, 331; see likewise 332 (Brown also cites the use of “hour” in Dan 8,17.19 but only as a very general background parallel and not as exercising influence either in John’s gospel or first epistle)

2,18 is commonly acknowledged to derive from the eschatological discourse (Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21)<sup>4</sup> and especially from the prophecy about the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thess 2,3-12<sup>5</sup>. Many conclude that the familiarity with these sources would have been in oral form, since 1 John 2,18 says “you heard that antichrist is coming”.

While the specific proposals that John’s gospel is the background for the “last hour” are made in a tentative manner, there have been no proposals for a specific Old Testament background. The remainder of this article attempts to adduce such a background as the most probable influence on John’s employment of the “last hour”.

## II. “The Last Hour” in 1 John 2,18 as an Allusion to Daniel’s Prophesied Eschatological Hour

John identifies the “antichrists” of 1 John 2,18 with those who had apostatized and left the true church, “they went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us” (1 John 2,19). He further describes them as false teachers and those who are not true believers, “who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (2,22-23). They are also called “false prophets” (1 John 4,1) who are inspired by the spirit “of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world” (1 John 4,3). The antichrist and those inspired by him represent “the spirit of error” (1 John 4,6).

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and F. VOUGA, *Die Johannesbriefe* (HNT 15/3; Tübingen 1990) 42. Likewise see other commentators on 1 John.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., see L. HARTMAN, *Prophecy Interpreted* (ConBNT 1; Lund 1966) 237-38, and KYSAR, *I, II, III John* (ACNT; Minneapolis, MN 1986) 59-60. Above all, the antichrist expectation in 1 John 2,18 and 4,3 likely derives in part from Matt 24,5.23-24; Mark 13,6.21-22; Luke 21,8 or a tradition represented by these texts.

<sup>5</sup> See R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Johannine Epistles* (Turnbridge Wells 1992) 135, among others, who contends that 2 Thess 2 was among the sources uppermost in mind behind 1 John 2,18.

1. *Development of the Synoptic and 2 Thessalonians Traditions in 1 John 2,18*

As noted briefly above, the reference in 1 John 2,18 to the readers having earlier "heard that antichrist is coming" and that "now many antichrists have appeared" (so also in 4,3) goes back to two early Christian sources, with which the audience has familiarity in oral form (could the audience's familiarity with this expectation have been due to hearing the reading of this material in its written gospel form in the weekly church assembly?). (1) Jesus' prophecy of "false christs", "'For false christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance'" (Matt 24,24-25; so also Mark 13,22-23, with minor variations from Matthew). (2) Second Thessalonians' prophecy of the "man of lawlessness" is also likely one of the sources included in the reference to "you have heard" in 1 John 2,18. There is general consensus that Jesus' prophecy of the eschatological trial and of the end-time antagonist is dependent on Daniel 7-12<sup>6</sup>. Likewise, there is significant acknowledgement that the 2 Thessalonians prophecy goes back to Daniel's prophecy of the end-time opponent who will attempt to deceive God's people (in Daniel 7-9; 11-12)<sup>7</sup>. The following texts from Daniel helped shape the view on this topic by the Synoptic discourse and 2 Thessalonians<sup>8</sup>: Dan. 8,12.23.25; 11,30.34.36.

That Jesus is developing the prophecy of Daniel's latter-day deceiver is apparent from the saturation of other Daniel 7-12 allusions elsewhere in Matthew 24 together with its synoptic parallels<sup>9</sup>. For example Matt 24,15 and 21 respectively quote the famous "abomination of desolation" and "great tribulation" passages from Daniel.

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. HARTMAN, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 145-177.

<sup>7</sup> Allusion is made to Dan 11,36 in 2 Thess 2,3-4, on which, e.g. among others, see I. H. MARSHALL, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCB; Grand Rapids, MI 1983) 190-191; G.K. BEALE, *1-2 Thessalonians* (IVPNTC 13; Downers Grove, IL 2003) 205-210, though the reference derives not only from Daniel but also from the synoptic discourse eschatological tradition (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). On this topic see HARTMAN, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 197-205, and D. WENHAM, *Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI 1995) 316-319.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, there is debate about the authorship of 2 Thessalonians, about which there is not space to discuss here.

<sup>9</sup> On which see further HARTMAN, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 145-177.

Thus, 1 John 2,18-23 is developing Jesus' prediction of "anti-christs" and that of 2 Thessalonians about the "man of lawlessness", both of which are based on Daniel's earlier prediction. It is important to underscore that 1 John 2,18 says that his audience had "heard" about Antichrist's coming, which apparently means that the audience was familiar with a circulating oral form of the expectations in the Synoptics and 2 Thessalonians. However, as noted earlier, we can speculate that even if the audience's knowledge was based directly on a written form of the Synoptics and 2 Thessalonians, they would still have "heard" it, since letters were read aloud by a lector in the early churches and not read by each person (see Col 4,16 and 1 Thess 5,27, especially in the light of Rev 1,3), as was plausibly the case also with the gospels by the end of the first century. In this respect, similarly, note that the aorist of ἀκούω can refer to people having "heard" at some point in the past the reading of the written words of the Old Testament (Matt 5,21.27.33.38.43; Jn. 12,34; James 5,11; 1 John 2,7).

We will now argue that 1 John 2,18 is also partly dependent on Daniel itself and not merely on the synoptic tradition and 2 Thessalonians 2.

## 2. *The Unique Lexical Parallel of 1 John's "Last Hour" with That of Daniel's Eschatological Hour*

Further analysis of 1 John 2,18 indicates that John, in fact, likely understands that the prophecy in Daniel and in Matthew 24 / 2 Thessalonians 2 was beginning to be fulfilled. This is most apparent through the introductory phrase in 2,18, "last hour": "children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour"<sup>10</sup>.

The only eschatological uses of "hour" (ὥρα) in all of the Old Testament occur in the Old Greek (= OG; not Theodotion) of Daniel 8, 11, and 12<sup>11</sup>. In every one of these occurrences in Daniel,

<sup>10</sup> The default English translation used in this essay is the NASB.

<sup>11</sup> There is an eschatological use of ὥρα in the apocryphal book of Sirach (18,20). This occurs in a broader context of proverbial statements and not in an overtly eschatological context like that of Daniel 8-12, and it also lacks the close connection to words for "last" or "end" that we will see are found in Daniel 8-12.

“hour” (ὥρα) refers not generally to the eschaton but to the specific eschatological time when the opponent of God’s people will attempt to deceive them or when they will suffer tribulation in connection to this deception. For example, the relevant Hebrew and Greek texts of Daniel 8 and 10–12 have the following:

Daniel 8,17.19; 10,14; 11,35.40; 12,1 (MT)	Daniel 8,17.19; 10,14; 11,35.40; 12,1 (OG [not Theod.])
8,17b: “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end [לעת־קץ]”	8,17b: “Son of man, understand, for yet unto the hour of time [εἰς ὥραν καιροῦ] is this vision”.
8,19: “He said, ‘Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation [בְּאַחֲרִית הַזֶּעַם], for it pertains to the appointed time of the end [קֵץ לְמוֹעֵד קֵץ]”.	8,19: “And he said to me, ‘behold I am announcing to you what will occur at the end of the wrath [ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῆς ὀργῆς] to the sons of your people; for yet unto the hour of time of the end it will remain [εἰς ὥρας καιροῦ συντελείας μενεῖ]”.
10,14: “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days [בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים], for the vision pertains to the days yet future [כִּי־עוֹד חֹזֶן לַיָּמִים]”.	10,14: (OG MSS. 967 and 88-Syh), “and I have come to inform you what will happen to your people in the last days [ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν], for the hour is yet for many days [ἔτι γὰρ ὥρα εἰς ἡμέρας]”. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew of Dan 10,14 reads “what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet”. Most mss of the OG have ἔτι γὰρ ὄρασις εἰς ἡμέρας (“for the vision is yet for days”) and Theod. virtually identically has ὅτι ἔτι ἡ ὄρασις εἰς ἡμέρας (“because the vision is yet for days”), which are literal Greek equivalents for the MT’s “for the vision pertains to the days yet”. However, some old Greek mss (967 and 88-Syh) have “for the hour (ὥρα) is yet for days”, by which “hour” (ὥρα) is substituted for “vision” (ὄρασις), likely intentionally so on analogy with Dan 8,17, where the two words occur closely together (ἔτι γὰρ εἰς ὥραν καιροῦ τοῦτο τὸ ὄραμα), though it is possible that ὄραις was unintentionally mis-read as ὥρα. This would mean that in 10,14 either “hour” is a scribal epexe-gesis of the directly preceding “latter days” or, if accidental, it would nevertheless likely have been understood by some later readers as such an epexe-gesis. The introductory γάρ (“for”) of v. 14 is likely explanatory, so that the following “hour” and “days” are synonymous with the preceding “latter

Daniel 8,17.19; 10,14; 11,35.40; 12,1 (MT)	Daniel 8,17.19; 10,14; 11,35.40; 12,1 (OG [not Theod.])
11,35: "Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time [עֲדֵת קֵץ]; because it is still to come at the appointed time [לְמוֹעֵד]."	11,35: "Some of those who have insight will understand in order to cleanse themselves and in order that they be selected out and in order that they be cleansed until the time of the end [ἕως καιροῦ συντελείας]; for the time is unto an hour [καιρὸς εἰς ὥρας]."
11,40: "And at the end time [וְבֵעֵת קֵץ] ... he will enter countries ..."	11,40: "And at the hour of the end [καὶ καθ' ὥραν συντελείας] ... he will enter into the country of Egypt ..."
12,1: "Now at that time [וְבֵעֵת הַהִיא] ... there will be a time of distress ..."	12,1: "and at that hour [καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὥραν ἐκείνην] ... there will be that day of tribulation ..."

These uses reveal that "hour" in the Old Greek of Daniel are part of phrases that are the equivalent to the Hebrew phrase "time of the end" or "end time" (Dan 8,17.19; 11,40), or are in parallelism with such a phrase (Dan 10,14; 11,35). John's twice repeated references to the "last hour" (ἐσχάτη ὥρα) are a close equivalent to these LXX uses. It may be that even John's predilection for repeating the phrase twice so closely together reflects the double repetition of parallel eschatological phrases in especially the OG of Daniel: see Dan 8,17.19 (where the actual word ὥρα occurs twice in close context), 11,35.40; 12,1.13; and ὥρα occurs again as a textual variant with an eschatological notion in 10,14 (see the chart)<sup>13</sup>. Though in Dan 8,19; 11,35; and 11,40 συντέλεια is used for the actual reference to "end" instead of ἐσχάτη, ὥρα is directly related to ἐσχάτη in Dan 8,19 (see above chart) and in the OG manuscript tradition of Dan 10,14 (and ὥρα in Dan 12,1 is more

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days" or, more likely, the "hour", which will not happen until after an indefinite period of "days", alone is equivalent to the "latter days".

<sup>13</sup> Could the use of ὥρα in the OG of Dan 11,6 also have eschatological overtones in the light of the other uses in Daniel 8–12 and in light of Dan 2,28–29 in connection to all four of the prophesied kingdoms that would rise and fall?



loosely connected to συντέλεια in 12,4). These are the only two places in the entire Greek Old Testament where the two words occur in close connection. For example, in Dan 8,19, "at the end [ἐπ' ἐσχάτου] of the wrath" (or "the wrathful end", as an adjectival genitive) is further explained directly by the phrase "unto the hour of time of the end (εἰς ὥρας καιροῦ συντελείας)" or "unto the hour of the end time" (taking συντελείας as an adjectival genitive). This is virtually equivalent to 1 John's ἐσχάτη ὥρα. Perhaps Dan 11,40 is closest to 1 John, where the phrase "the hour of the end" (ὥραν συντελείας) occurs and refers to the end-time opponent's hostile activities, though συντέλεια instead of ἐσχάτη occurs there in the OG<sup>14</sup>. The word συντέλεια in the phrase ὥραν συντελείας of Dan 11,40 can easily be taken as an adjectival genitive, with the rendering of "ending hour" or "final hour" or "consummative hour". If any of these adjectival renderings were correct, they would be even more strikingly similar to 1 John's "last hour".

It is not completely clear how ὥρα ("hour") functions when it is used in conjunction with καιρός ("time") in the OG of Dan 8,17,19, and 11,35. Elsewhere in the LXX the two terms occur together. In such cases, they can be used synonymously to refer to the same period (2 Kgs 4,16-17; Job 5,26; Hos 2,11; Dan 4,26 [OG]), or "hour" can be a particular part of the more general "time" (Gen 18,10,14), or, on the other hand, "time" can be a particular part of a broader "hour" (Exod 13,10). "The hour" of "the end-time" in Dan 8,19 appears to designate a particular time of the broader "end-time" period, and this clarifies that the "hour" in 8,17 ("unto the hour of time") has the same idea<sup>15</sup>. Identically, "the hour" of "the end-time" in Dan 11,35 indicates a specific moment of the more general "end-time". In both Dan 8,19 and 11,35, ὥρα translates the Hebrew מועד ("appointed time"), which underscores the divinely set notion of the "hour".

<sup>14</sup> Note that in the LXX συντέλεια renders אחרית in Deut 11,12 ("the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it [i.e., the land] from the beginning of the year to the end of the year"); the related Greek word τελευταῖος ("last, final") translates אחרית in Prov 14,12-13; 16,25; 20,21.

<sup>15</sup> It is possible, however, that "time" in 8,19 is an appositional genitive, yielding the rendering of "unto an hour, which is the end-time", and "time" in 8,17 may function likewise, "unto the hour which is the time".

One might attempt to argue that the OG's rendering of an explicit eschatological expression in Hebrew ("time of the end") by only "an hour of time" in Dan 8,17 de-eschatologizes the Hebrew expression there. Such a non-eschatological nuance of "hour" might be further strengthened by observing that in Dan 11,35 the OG's "time unto an hour" renders only the Hebrew "appointed time", and in Dan 12,1 it renders merely the Hebrew for "time" by "hour".

Such a de-eschatologizing is, however, unlikely, since the immediate contexts of all of the above three passages in the OG clearly delineate its eschatological nature by an explicit eschatological clause that contributes such an idea to the use of "hour" (though in 12,1 this does not come until 12,4 ["seal up the book until the time of the end"]; however the mention of the last resurrection in 12,2 is an obvious end-time reference). In particular, for example, the phrase εἰς ὥραν καιροῦ ("unto an hour of time") in 8,17 is immediately explained in 8,19 by εἰς ὥρας καιροῦ συντελείας ("unto an hour of the end-time"). Both of these phrases in 8,17 and 8,19 refer to the "vision" of Dan 8,9-27 in which the end-time fiend is prophesied to oppress, deceive, and corrupt the sanctuary of the covenant community. Likewise, καιρὸς εἰς ὥρας ("the time is unto an hour") in Dan 11,35 is directly preceded by ἕως καιροῦ συντελείας ("until the time of the end"). The eschatological nuance of ὥρα is particularly highlighted in 11,40: ὥραν συντελείας ("the hour of the end" or "the final hour")<sup>16</sup>. This should not be surprising, since "hour" in 8,17,19 and 10,14 clearly has already been part of an end-time notion or directly related to such a notion. Further enhancing the end-time aspect of the phrase in 11,40 is the observation that it also appears to be synonymous with the repeated eschatological expressions elsewhere in Daniel 9–12 (OG) that use συντέλεια (see "end of times", συντέλειαν

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel 11,45 (OG) refers to "the hour of his end" (ὥρα τῆς συντελείας αὐτοῦ), which is identical to the phrase in v. 40, except for the pronoun "his". This refers to the final demise of the end-time fiend in which "hour" is a specific point of time within the "hour" of v. 40, which has a broader eschatological time scope that includes other end-time events such as the persecution and deception of the final opponent, the saints' perseverance despite persecution, and, as 12,1-3 reveals, the tribulation of Israel, her deliverance, resurrection, and glorification.

καιρῶν, in Dan 9,27a, "the end of the days", συντέλειαν ἡμερῶν, in Dan 12,13, or "time of the end", καιροῦ συντελείας in Dan 9,27b; 11,35; 12,4.7). Even the "hour" of Dan 12,1 has clear eschatological meaning, since its introductory phrase (MT, "Now at that time" = OG, "and at that hour") takes us back to the events of 11,30-45, which prominently feature the prophecy of the end-time opponent's oppression and deception of those in the covenant community. In this respect, the "hour" of 12,1 has its likely specific antecedent in the eschatological "hour" of 11,35, "the hour of the end" in 11,40-41, and "the hour of his [i.e., the end-time opponent's] end" in 11,45. It is also relevant to recall that the prophetic narrative about the end-time foe begins in Dan 11,21, whose period of reign in replacement of a prior oppressor is introduced in v. 20 by the phrase ἐν ἡμέραις ἐσχάταις, and which likely picks up again on the same phrase in Dan 10,14 (which is directly linked to ὥρα in the OG MS tradition there).

Thus, 1 John's equivalent use of ὥρα ("hour") + the adjective of ἔσχατος ("last") is most probably based on the OG of Daniel's eschatological uses of ὥρα ("hour") + συντέλεια ("end") or the uses of ὥρα in apposition to ἔσχατος ("last") or in parallel with or in direct connection to ἔσχατος. Not only is the combined terminology unique to Daniel and 1 John 2, but the concept is strikingly almost the same: the end-time hour in which the final opponent of God's people comes into the community of faith to corrupt it and to deceive it about the "truth". The context of 1 John also has language common to Daniel 7-8, which is not allusive to Daniel but shows further the thematic compatibility of the surrounding context of 1 John 2,18 with that of the Daniel 7-8 context. Daniel 8,12 refers to the final opponent "casting truth [Heb. אֱמֶת] to the ground", and 1 John 4,6 contrasts the Antichrist's "spirit of error" with the "spirit of truth". Similarly, the "Antichrist[s]" is called "the liar," and with respect to him John says that "no lie is of the truth" (2,18-19.21-22). Recall also that the eschatological antagonist "will speak words against the Most High and will wear down the saints of the Highest One" (Dan 7,25, OG) and that some MSS, versions, and Fathers replaced "wear down" (= κατατρίβω [Lxx] / παλαιόω [Theod.] = Aram. כִּלָּא) with "deceive" (πλανάω). John uses the same word to describe the Antichrist and his party (1 John 2,26; 3,7). Though the Dan 7,25 (OG) variant is likely secondary, its presence in the textual tradition may

have formed part of the way this text was received and understood by the end of the first century A.D.

It is true that early Judaism does occasionally have an expectation of an end-time tribulation characterized by false teaching and deception<sup>17</sup>. Early Judaism, however, rarely connects this particular expectation with the precise terminology of “hour” (ὥρα), nor does it connect it with an individual end-time opponent (except apparently only *Sib. Or.* 2,160-74; 3,63-64 and 5,361-80). In contrast, early Christian literature does link eschatology to an individual adversary under the influence of Daniel 7-12, though relatively rarely in connection to the “hour”<sup>18</sup>.

It is important at this point to mention the possible relevance of *1 Enoch* 48,2 (“at that hour the son of man was named”). This passage is in direct connection in the preceding context to ungodly persecutors of the righteous who will be judged by the “Son of Man” (*1 Enoch* 46,1-48,1), who will himself vindicate the oppressed saints. There are a number of Daniel allusions in this section. Among these Daniel allusions is that of the Daniel 7 “Son of Man” and the “hour” in 48,2, which are probably derived from Dan 12,1 (OG), since the resurrection prophecy of Dan 12,2 has just been appealed to in *1 Enoch* 47,3 (“and the books of the living were opened”)<sup>19</sup>. This would appear to be the closest parallel to 1 John 2,18 in Judaism with respect to the use of “hour” in direct connection to a final tribulation and end-time opponents together with

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<sup>17</sup> E.g., 4Q169 [= 4QpNah] 3-4 ii.2; and 3-4 iii.3; 1QpHab 2,5-10; CD-A 1,12-19; 4Q174 1-3 i.8-9.13-16.18-19; *T. Jud.* 18,1-3; *T. Iss.* 6,1-2; *T. Zeb.* 9,5-8a; *T. Mos.* 7,1-10; and the early Christian *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 3,30-31; 4,1-12; cf. 4,1; cf. also *T. Dan* 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Matt 24,5.23.26 (cf. parallels in Mark 13,6.21 [and, e.g., “hour” in Mk. 13,11.32; 14,35.41]; Luke 21,8); 2 Thess 2,3-4; Rev 13,1-8; 17,7-8; 19,19-20; *Did.* 16,3-4; *Apocalypse of Peter* 2 (the latter two also influenced by Matthew 24 and par.). *Apocalypse of Elijah*, partly under the influence of Matthew 24 and 2 Thess 2,3, includes both deception (3,1.5-18; 4,15) and persecution (1,10; 4,2.7-10), and *Mart. Asc. Isa.* 4,2-14 (1<sup>st</sup>-early 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. A.D.) also includes both in its expectation of the adversary. R. BAUCKHAM, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh 1993) 425-427, considers this section heavily influenced by Daniel. See also BAUCKHAM, *Climax of Prophecy*, 409-422, for semi-eschatological prophecies in the *Sibylline Oracles* about Nero as the adversary, some of which are modeled on Daniel 7; 8; and 11.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to my research student, Stefanos Mihalios, for bringing my attention to this text.

mention of a messianic figure (for the latter, see 1 John 2,22-24). However, the two uses are likely independent of one another since, in contrast to *1 Enoch*, 1 John uses the distinctive phrase "last hour", and refers to an individual eschatological opponent.

### 3. *The Interpretative Use of Daniel's Eschatological Hour by 1 John 2,18*

Some might want to see John using the Danielic "last hour" differently than Daniel, perhaps in some mere analogical non-eschatological manner or in a way that contravenes the basic meaning in Daniel. The reason that some might argue in this manner is because the situation in 1 John is of a church composed of Christians facing deception and not faithful Jews in the nation of Israel itself, which faced not only deception but also persecution, about which Daniel prophesies. But such an argument is unlikely in the light of our conclusion just reached that, together with unique terminology, the concept in common between Daniel's and 1 John's latter-day "hour" is an eschatological adversary who comes into the community of faith to mislead about the "truth". At least that much, which is part of the core of the notion in Daniel, is in common between the two.

John's use of "last" + "hour" with reference to the final period of end-time deception, as in Daniel, appears to be his way of indicating that Daniel's prophecy about the eschatological opponent's deceptive activity is beginning to be fulfilled in his own day among his readership. In addition, the prophecy of an eschatological tribulation in which a final false prophet will enter the covenant community and deceive occurs in the Old Testament only in Daniel 7-12. It is true that John's community is not theocratic Israel, but they are the new covenant community that lies in continuity with Israel, which is termed elsewhere in the NT "the Israel of God" (Gal 5,16), where also there are other expressions identifying the Church as the eschatological Israel<sup>20</sup>. Even in 1 John 2,27, the

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<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Rom 2,25-29 and Gal 4,26; 9,6; 1 Cor 10,1; 2 Cor 6,16-18; Phil 3,3; note Paul's concept that Christ represents true Israel (cf. also Isa 49,3,6 in Luke 2,32) and, therefore, those who identify with him are true Israel (see Isa 49,6 in Acts 13,47 and Isa 49,8 in 2 Cor 6,2), i.e., the seed of Abraham (e.g., see Gal 3,16,29).

readers are said to be those participating in the fulfillment of Israel's new covenant prophecy of Jer 38,34 LXX (= Jer 31,34 MT).

This inaugurated fulfillment of Daniel is also apparent from the phrase "antichrist is coming and even now many antichrists have come". John then says at the conclusion of 2,18 that on the basis of this (ὅθεν), "we know that it is the last hour". He says that, according to prophetic expectation, "antichrist is coming" but the abrupt phrase "even now many antichrists have come" most probably indicates that this prophetic expectation has begun to be realized.

The almost identical "already and not yet" expressions employing "hour" (ὥρα) in John's gospel support this conclusion of inaugurated fulfillment. Particularly supportive is John 5,25-29 ("an hour is coming and now is"), which also alludes to Dan 12,1-2 (LXX), including the OG of Daniel's use of ὥρα.

Corresponding to Daniel's use of "hour," resurrection "to eternal life," and resurrection of the wicked and righteous is John's reference to gaining "eternal life" (5,24), "hour" (5,25, 28), "resurrection of life" (5,29), and the mention of resurrection for both unbelievers and believers (5,28-29). John 5,28-29 asserts that the yet future physical resurrection will still assuredly occur, just as Daniel prophesied. But Jesus also understands that the Daniel 12 prophecy has already begun its fulfillment. The most telltale sign of this is Jesus' reference in v. 25 to "hour" together with "the already and not yet" formula "is coming and now is". Daniel's "hour" (ὥρα) of resurrection and prophecy of "eternal life" are not merely to find fulfillment at the very end of world history (John 5,28) but have begun in the midst of Christ's ministry (John 5,25). Daniel 12,1-2 refers to the hour of tribulation followed by resurrection. John 5,25-29 focuses on Daniel's prophecy of resurrection and sees that it occurs still within the time scope of the "hour" mentioned in Dan 12,1. However, the fulfillment of Daniel's resurrection prophecy in the John 5 text has occurred in a staggered manner: first spiritually and later physically at the final day. In partial confirmation of this, G. Ferraro has argued that there are several allusions to Daniel 7 and 11,35-12,4 in John 5,22-29, which include a reference back to Daniel's eschatological use of "hour" (in Dan 11,35.40.45; 12,1) in Jesus' mention of "hour" in John 5,25 and 5,28<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> G. FERRARO, *L'Orà' di Cristo nel Quarto Vangelo* (Aloisiana 10;

On the other hand, “hour” in 1 John 2,18 refers to the hour of tribulation that occurs repeatedly in Daniel 8 and 11–12 (though 1 John 2,18 is directly preceded by a reference to believers who will “abide forever” [1 John 2,17], which likely refers to resurrection life).

Other “already and not yet” uses of “hour” in John’s gospel likely also have a Danielic background. In this regard, J. Beutler, who, after briefly discussing “hour” in Dan 11,35.40.45 and 12,1<sup>22</sup>, concludes with respect to the various uses of “hour” in John’s gospel (e.g., John 16,2.4.21.32) that “the eschatological hour of judgment and resurrection, derived from Daniel, is taken up under various aspects [by John], liturgical, Christological and ecclesial”<sup>23</sup>. The uses in John 16 develop the eschatological tribulation uses from Daniel (note 16,32–33, where ὥρα and θλίψις occur, as in Dan 12,1). Likewise, the “already and not yet” formula with “hour” in John 4,20–24 probably reflects the uses of “hour” in Dan 8,11–19, where the “hour” refers to the destruction of the temple followed by its restoration (8,14), and the uses in Dan 11,31–12,2 point to the same thing, though there the restoration is portrayed as resurrection (Dan 12,1–3). Similarly, John 4,20–24 assumes the destruction or irrelevance of the old temple and the restoration of its worship in a non-localized geographical place.

Likewise, the Danielic prophecy is evoked when the synoptic eschatological discourse uses ὥρα once to refer to the oppression of believers during the final tribulation period: “When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13,11). Thus, Mark utilizes ὥρα in a way similar to the use of ὥρα in the OG of Daniel 8, 10–12<sup>24</sup>. As in the Johannine uses, this Markan use could also be de-

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Rome 1974) 71–81. See also J. FREY, *Die johanneische Eschatologie* (Tübingen 2000) III, 381–391, who sees that the idea of the “coming hour” in John 5,28 and generally in the Johannine tradition has been inspired by the OG of Dan 11,40.45 and 12,1.

<sup>22</sup> J. BEUTLER, *Judaism and the Jews in the Gospel of John* (SubBi 30; Rome 2006) 119–125.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 24,36.44.50; 25,13; Mark 13,32 also use ὥρα to refer to the unexpected future coming of Christ. See C. A. EVANS *Mark 8,27–16,20* (WBC 34B; Dallas, TX 2002) 411, who contends that the “hour” theme in

rived from Daniel, the plausibility of which is enhanced by observing that only three verses later Mark (13,14) quotes the “abomination of desolation” prophecy from Daniel (Dan 9,27; 11,31; 12,11). Could the eschatological uses of ὥρα in Mark and John have been formative for the author of 1 John, especially since some of them appear to have been influenced by Daniel? Possibly, but it is more likely that 1 John 2,18’s “last hour” has been most formatively influenced by the uses in Daniel, since we have seen that the unique language of “last” + “hour” or “final” (or “ending” or “consummative”) + “hour” occurs only in Daniel 8–12 (OG) and 1 John 2,18. In this respect, that Matt 24,15 encourages the reader explicitly to refer back to Daniel itself could be significant<sup>25</sup>. Could this have provided a precedent for the writer of 1 John likewise so to do?

Consequently, the expression in 1 John 2,18 is an allusion to the repeated expressions especially in Dan 8,19 and 11,40, though the other eschatological uses in Daniel 8–12 may have been in mind.

John goes on to say a little later in chapter 4 of his epistle that this prophecy of the “antichrist” in 1 John 2,18 has started to be fulfilled not only because his foretold false prophetic helpers are already on the scene, but because there is a true sense for him in which the spirit of Daniel’s end-time opponent is already present (1 John 4,3, “this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have

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Mark 14,35.41 comes from Jesus himself, who was influenced by themes and vocabulary from Daniel (Dan 4,17.26; 5,5; 8,17.19; 11,35.40.45), which had eschatological overtones. Similarly, cf. B. PITRE, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile* (Grand Rapids, MI 2005) 482, who agrees with other commentators that the “hour” in Mark 14,35.41 is an end-time “hour” that is “evocative of the book of Daniel (esp. Dan 11,35.40.45)”, where the “hour” refers to an eschatological tribulation.

<sup>25</sup> See Matthew 24,15: “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).” Though gospel critics in the past assumed that the exhortation for the “reader” to “understand” referred to the readers of Mark’s gospel (assuming Markan priority), it is becoming increasingly recognized that in both Mark, and so also Matthew, it is an exhortation to readers of the book of Daniel to understand the “abomination of desolation” prophecy and how it relates to the events that Jesus is narrating about the coming tribulation. See, e.g., see D.A. CARSON, *Matthew* (EBC; Grand Rapids, MI 1995) 500–501; D.L. TURNER, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI 2008) 577.



heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world"). Thus, though the Antichrist has not yet come in his incarnate form into the midst of national Israel's covenant community prophesied by Daniel, his "spirit" is here inspiring his false teachers in antithetical parallelism to the work of Christ's Spirit working in his true people. Likewise, the persecution that Daniel prophesied would come through the end-time opponent has not apparently begun in the community to which 1 John is directed. But these lack of correspondences with the full scope of Daniel's prophecy of the eschatological enemy do not indicate that Daniel is not in mind but that only part of his prophecy has begun to be fulfilled. In this respect, likewise, the Danielic eschatological discourse in Matthew 24 makes only one mention of persecution (Matt 24,9), and 2 Thess 2,1-17 makes no mention at all of persecution but only of deception and apostasy (though cf. 2 Thess 1,4-6), while making clear reference to Daniel's end-time foe. A New Testament writer can make allusion to an Old Testament context without referring to all the parts of that Old Testament context, even when inaugurated fulfillment may not be the explanation for omitting some of those parts.

Consequently, the prophecy of the Antichrist has begun fulfillment in that his "spirit" has begun to come and inspire his false teachers to do their deceiving work. The prophecy has begun literally also in the sense that the prophesied deceptive teachers are working in the covenant community, as they were literally prophesied so to do (on which see, e.g., Dan 11,30-31.34 and Theod. of Dan 11,32.34).

### III. The Standard Criteria for Validating Allusions and the Application to 1 John 2,18

The contention of this essay is that the overall weight of the cumulative arguments points to the probability that the repeated reference in 1 John 2,18 to "the last hour" derives from Daniel's repeatedly prophesied eschatological hour. How does the evidence of our argument measure up to the now often-cited "tests" for the validity of OT echoes and allusions formulated by Richard B. Hays?<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT 1989) 29-32.

### 1. *Availability to Author and Readers*

All scholars acknowledge that the Book of Daniel existed before the time of the first century A.D. in both Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek, and that it was available in written and oral form. If dependence on some form of the synoptic eschatological discourse is accepted, then it may even be possible that the author of 1 John expected his readers to accept Daniel as Scripture (in the light of Mark 13,14 and Matt 24,15). This becomes a likelihood, since the Bible of the early church was the Greek OT, which, of course, contained Daniel within it.

### 2. *Volume from the OT Background*

It is true that the connection of the “last hour” in 1 John with the use of “hour” and “end” in Daniel is not identical in that Daniel does not express that precise phrase. Nevertheless, nearly the precise phrase does occur in 1 John 2,18 (“hour of the end” in Dan 11,40 and “an hour of the time of the end” in Dan 8,19 — both phrases using συντέλεια instead of ἔσχατος). In addition, we have found that ἔσχατος is closely linked in context to ὥρα (Dan 8,19), as well as being in close syntactical connection to it (Dan 10,14). It would seem to be a pedantic criticism to say that since the phrases in Daniel and 1 John 2,18 are not exactly identical, that this weakens the viability of a case for a direct literary relationship. While one cannot conclude that an allusion to Daniel is beyond doubt, the unique combination of wording makes it at least plausible and, we think, even more probable than the more common suggestion of a shared apocalyptic motif (on which cf. n. 2), especially in the light of the following points of this section. It is possible that though the author intended the allusion, which we think is the case, the readers would not have perceived it, but it seems likely that if the author did intend it, then he would have expected, at least, some hearers to pick up on it initially and others to grasp it later on subsequent readings.

In addition, the criterion of “volume” also includes a New Testament text’s connection to unique ideas in the Old Testament. The combined ideas of the eschatological hour, an individual opponent who represents other opponents, and the motif of deception in 1 John 2,18 is unique to Daniel 8 and 11 in the Old Testament, as

pointed out earlier in the essay (though the explicit notion of deception is not mentioned until 1 John 2,21-23.26).

### 3. *Recurrence of the OT Text Elsewhere*

The Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation use ὥρα under the influence of Daniel's (Old Greek) eschatological use of ὥρα. Some scholars would see all of these works to have been written by the same author as that of the Johannine Epistles, and, if so, the uses of ὥρα would be examples of other Danielic uses of ὥρα elsewhere by the same author. However, regardless of the thorny issues about authorship of John's Gospel and Revelation, they are considered by many to be generally a part of a broadly conceived Johannine corpus or deriving from a Johannine community, so that even according to this broader view the uses of ὥρα may still be connected.

One might think that there is hardly any Old Testament influence in 1 John, especially since there are no quotations, which would make it unusual that 1 John 2,18 would contain an Old Testament allusion. Recently, however, probable Old Testament allusions have been detected in the epistle. We have space only to list some of the more prominent such allusions here: (a) Isa 6,10 in 1 John 2,11; (b) Jer 38,34 Lxx (= 31,34 MT) in 1 John 2,27; (c) the story of Cain in Gen 4,1-25 in 1 John 3,12; (d) not closing the heart against a brother in need but meeting the need (Deut 15,7-8 in 1 John 3,17)<sup>27</sup>. In addition, though overlooked by modern commentators, Henry Gough convincingly proposed over a hundred and fifty years ago that 1 John 3,22 (τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιούμεν) made a clear reference back to Exod 15,26 and Deut 13,19 (φυλάσσειν πάσας τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ . . . ποιεῖν . . . τὸ ἀρεστὸν ἐναντίον κυρίου; this Greek wording is from the Deuteronomy parallel, whereas Exodus 15

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<sup>27</sup> For 1 John 2,11, see J.M. LIEU, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge 1991) 87, and idem, *I, II, & III John* (Louisville – London 2008) 82-83. For 1 John 2,27 see D.A. CARSON, "1-3 John", *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G.K. BEALE – D.A. CARSON) (Grand Rapids, MI 2007) 1065-1066. For 1 John 3,12 see CARSON, "1-3 John", 1066-67; for 1 John 3,17, see C.G. KRUSE, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI – Leicester 2000) 138.

inverts the order of the phrases and contains other minor differences, which suggests the former is more in focus)<sup>28</sup>. Besides the full phrase “do what is pleasing before him [or before the Lord]” found uniquely only in Exod 15,26/Deut 13,19 and in 1 John 3,22, the lexical combination of τὰς ἐντολάς and ποιέω + ἀρεστόν occurs only in the same two OT and NT passages.

One last allusion deserves attention: the prophesied “lawlessness” of Dan 11,32 (Theod, Lxx) and 12,10 (Theod, Lxx) in 1 John 3,4, though this proposed allusion needs some comment with respect to its validity. In 2,17-27 the emphasis has been on resisting the temptations to false belief, and now the emphasis in 2,28-3,10 is shifted to resisting temptation to sinful living. That is, perseverance in correct belief necessarily leads to perseverance in righteous living. With respect to the emphasis on righteous living, 1 John 3,4 says, “Everyone doing the sin [ἁμαρτία] also does the lawlessness [ἀνομία], and the sin [ἁμαρτία] is the lawlessness [ἀνομία]”. “Sin” here is equated with “lawlessness”. Some significant commentators believe that this is not speaking of sin and lawlessness in general but “the” prophesied “lawlessness” that was to occur at the very end of time. Accordingly, the definite article before ἁμαρτία and ἀνομία (which at first sight may seem awkward) designates the expected coming eschatological sin and lawlessness<sup>29</sup>.

Is it merely coincidental that virtually all of the passages cited by these commentators as expressing the expected eschatological lawlessness are part of a Danielic or synoptic tradition, the latter of which we have seen to be saturated with Daniel’s eschatology and also standing in the background of 1 John 2,18?<sup>30</sup> What makes

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<sup>28</sup> H. GOUGH, *The New Testament Quotations, Collated with the Scriptures of the Old Testament* (London 1855) 37-38.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., MARSHALL, *Epistles of John*, 176-177, and especially, BROWN, *Epistles of John*, 399-400.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., BROWN, *Epistles of John*, 399-400, adduces the following texts anticipating this coming eschatological lawlessness: *T. Dan* 6,1-6; *Let. Barn.* 4,1-4.9; 18,1-2; *Matt* 7,22; 13,41; 24,11-12; *Did.* 16,3-4; 2 *Thess* 2,3-8. Among these, only *T. Dan* 6,1-6, *Matt* 7,22 and 13,41 are not apparently related to one of the two Danielic or Synoptic traditions (for Danielic influence behind the “lawlessness” in 2 *Thess* 2,3, e.g., see BEALE, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 206-209). *Letter of Barnabas* and the *Didache* may well be contemporary with 1 John, and thus also be developing respectively Daniel and the Synoptic tradition. There is also an end-time opponent prophecy in *Sib. Or.* 3,63-74 (latter

Daniel more prominent as an influence in 1 John 3,4 than these other texts developing Daniel is that only in the Septuagintal tradition of Daniel is eschatological "sin" equated with eschatological "lawlessness", as in 1 John 3,4. Daniel 12,10 (Theod.) describes the end-time law-breakers as "the lawless ones [ἄνομοι] [who] shall do lawlessness [ἀνομήσωσιν], and none of the lawless ones [ἄνομοι] shall understand ...". The OG has in the very same verse, "the sinners [οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ] will sin [ἁμαρτώσιν] and by no means should the sinners [οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ] understand ...". In addition, those who commit this latter-day lawlessness of Dan 12,10, which entails lack of understanding, have earlier been described in Dan 11,32 (Theod.) as "the ones who do lawlessness [οἱ ἀνομοῦντες] who will bring about a covenant in deceitful ways". And in the same verse, the OG has "in sins [ἐν ἁμαρτίαις] toward the covenant they will pollute among a hardened people". Here, once again, "the ones doing lawlessness" is parallel in the OG to "sinning" (literally, "in sins"). What is striking about both Septuagintal renderings is that they interpret the individual end-time opponent of the Hebrew text corporately as the false teachers and compromisers who are clearly in mind elsewhere in the MT (e.g., Dan 11,31-32.34). This is striking in the light of the individual and corporate view of the Antichrist in 1 John 2,18-19.22; 4,1-6.

Accordingly, the Septuagintal tradition equates the prophecy of "the lawless ones doing lawlessness" with "the sinners sinning" (note again even the definite article before "sinners" in the OG), just as 1 John 3,4 equates those doing "the sin" with those doing "the lawlessness". This is unique in all of the Greek literature of the OT, early Judaism, and early Christianity, including the parallel expectations of the expected lawlessness. While it is true that ἁμαρτία and ἀνομία (including the alternate forms of these words, such as the verbal) are closely juxtaposed throughout the LXX, Dan 11,32 and 12,10 are the only places where the juxtaposition occurs as part of a prophecy of the end-time "sin" and "lawlessness" (Isa

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part of first cent. A.D. or later) in which those deceived by him are called "lawless" (ἄνομος). *Apocalypse of Elijah* (A.D. 150-275) refers to the eschatological fiend as "the son of lawlessness" (1,10; 3,1.5.13.18; 4,2.15.20.28.31; 5,6.10.32) and "the lawless one" (2,41), all ultimately under the influence likely of 2 Thess 2,3. The use in *Apoc. Elijah* 4,31 is also linked directly to the end-time "hour" (4,30).

27,9 and 53,5 prophesy about the future, but with respect to Israel's "sin" and "lawlessness" being forgiven). Therefore, "the lawlessness" of 1 John 3,4 is that expected lawlessness of the end-time opponent and his colleagues (the latter of which Dan 11,32 and 12,10 describe prophetically), which has begun its fulfillment in John's community, as we have argued in the case of 1 John 2,18. If all of this is on the right track, then there is a natural link between 2,18 and 3,4, which is fueled further by noticing that the *vūv* in 2,28 and again in 3,2, are likely eschatological *vūv*'s, further developing the *vūv* that occurs for the first time in 2,18, which is clearly eschatological (as is the *vūv* in 4,3).

There has also been recent work that shows that a number of phrases in 1 John have been coined against the general background of Septuagintal vocabulary<sup>31</sup>, which shows that the author's mind has been generally influenced at points by the Septuagint.

The point of this section is to show that, while 1 John is not saturated with Old Testament allusions, there are some. In fact, there is even allusion to other parts of Daniel and even in the immediate context of 2,18, which makes an allusion there, at least, something that would not be foreign to the context.

#### 4. *Thematic Coherence*

The alleged Daniel allusion in 1 John 2,18 fits well into the author's line of argumentation in chapters 2 and 3. The allusion illuminates and enhances the significance of John's argument in that the personal and local struggle that they have had with the secessionists is placed within a wider redemptive-historical context. They are not merely Christian Gentiles (for the most part) who are trying to remain loyal to the truth, but in doing so they are eschatological Israelites who are living in the dawning of the end-time tribulation predicted by Daniel and Jesus. Indeed, they are living in the "last hour". This should lead to assurance that they really do "know God" and should motivate them "to display strength and take action" in not being deceived "by smooth words" of the lawless antichrists (Dan 11,32). This then would appear to be a

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<sup>31</sup> E.g., see R.W. YARBROUGH, *1-3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI 2008) 34, 171, 181-182, 272, 323.

plausible satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation made upon the readers (Hays' seventh "test").

### 5. *Historical Plausibility*

It is plausible that the author intended to make reference to Daniel's latter-day tribulation, since this was a significant notion repeatedly developed in other New Testament and early Christian traditions, as we have seen (the idea of such an end-time trial was also an important motif in second temple Judaism, though often not in direct connection to Danielic influence). Therefore, Jewish-Christian readers and some Gentiles would seem to have been in a position to be familiar with Daniel, particularly with the general Jewish expectation of tribulation and with the other relevant Danielic New Testament expectations. Therefore, such an allusion in 1 John 2,18 would not have seemed to be a bolt of lightning from nowhere for these reader/hearers. New Gentile converts would have become familiar with such themes and texts over time through ongoing instruction from the Greek Old Testament, which was the formal Bible of the first-century church. As this happened, they presumably would have grown to recognize and appreciate the Daniel allusion in 1 John 2,18 on subsequent readings.

### 6. *History of Interpretation*

There is apparently no evidence in the history of the interpretation of 1 John 2,18 that anyone has specifically seen allusion to the eschatological uses of ὥρα in Daniel. On the other hand, we have seen that a number of early Christian and Jewish texts have been offered by commentators as a general background, many of which are from the end-time opponent tradition of Daniel 7–12 and from texts containing various eschatological expressions ("latter days", "last day", and "hour"), some of which have been observed to be found in references in Daniel 2 and 8–12. Recall, for example, Brown, who included the end-time "hour" of Dan 8,17.19 as most prominent among the broad background of Old Testament and Jewish texts containing eschatological phrases. Thus, this broad background of 1 John 2,18 proposed by others, which is often linked to Daniel, should make it less surprising that allusion to the eschatological hour of Daniel 8–12 might also be present. In

addition, such a Daniel allusion in 1 John 2,18 is pointed to by some who have specifically proposed that the Gospel of John's use of "hour" and "last day" is the most particular background<sup>32</sup>. Such a background in John's Gospel is an attractive proposal since the Gospel's use of ὥρα has itself also been observed to have been formulated under the influence of the Danielic use of the hour<sup>33</sup>. This connection between the Fourth Gospel's use of ὥρα with that of 1 John would be enhanced even more if the two were written by the same author<sup>34</sup>. Even if one merely held that 1 John was written by someone in the Johannine circle or community, the connection would still be an attractive option. Likewise, there has been observation that many of the uses of ὥρα in John's Apocalypse derive also from the Old Greek of Daniel<sup>35</sup>. If John's gospel, the Synoptic apocalypse, Revelation, 2 Thessalonians, and other early Christian and Jewish texts can make allusion to Daniel<sup>36</sup>, especially sometimes to the Danielic "hour"<sup>37</sup>, why would it be unusual to see 1 John 2,18 doing the same thing?

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<sup>32</sup> So, e.g., tentatively, BROWN, *Johannine Epistles*, 331-332.

<sup>33</sup> On which see FERRARO, *L'Orà di Cristo nel Quarto Vangelo*, 71-81, FREY, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, III, 381-391, and BEUTLER, *Judaism and the Jews in the Gospel of John*, 119-125. Most recently, see S. MIHALIOS, "The Danielic Eschatological Hour in the Johannine Literature" (Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College Graduate School 2008), forthcoming with the same title in *Library of New Testament Studies* 436 (London – New York 2011).

<sup>34</sup> E.g., see C.G. KRUSE, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 9-15.

<sup>35</sup> The Book of Revelation also uses ὥρα under the influence of Daniel's (OG) eschatological use of ὥρα (Rev 3,10; 14,7), as well as that of Dan 4,17a (OG), which is employed by Rev 17,12 and 18,10.17.19 in a typological manner with regard respectively to the time leading up to the last judgment and to the time of the final judgment itself (on which see G. K. BEALE, "A Reconsideration of the Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse," *Biblica* 67 (1986), 539-543, and idem., *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1999) 289-292, 750-754, 878-880, 906-908, 913-915). In particular, the use in Rev 14,7 is significant since it is implicitly related to the demise of the "beast" (see 14,8-11), whose picture in Rev 13,1-11 is constructed from a series of allusions to the eschatological portrayal in Daniel 7 (on the last point see BEALE, *Revelation*, 728-730).

<sup>36</sup> With respect more broadly to the use of Daniel in Judaism and in Revelation, see BEALE, *Use of Daniel*.

<sup>37</sup> Here with respect only to ὥρα.



One might respond to this by contending that it did not matter whether or not the readers recognized the Danielic origin of the "last hour", since the author was not intending "to argue from the OT or saw any need to set God's action with and for this community within any wider canvass"<sup>38</sup>. Yet, even if the author is directly dependent only on some oral synoptic-Danielic tradition, it would seem likely at least that the "wider canvass" of the synoptic discourse, and to some degree its Danielic background, would come into view for the author and the readers.

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In conclusion, it is possible that 1 John 2,18 reflects not Daniel as a written document but an oral tradition based on Daniel 7-12 that he inherited, which may have been in the form of a broader tradition from which the synoptic eschatological discourse draws. In the light of the above evidence of this essay, however, we believe the burden of proof has been offered that 1 John 2,18 is an allusion to the eschatological "hour" references in the OG of Daniel 8-12. To sum up, for John, the end-time tribulation prophesied by Daniel 12 (Dan 12,1), as well as by Daniel 8 and 11, and by Jesus (Matt 24,21; Mark 13,19) and 2 Thessalonians 2, had begun in the midst of the church community to which he was writing. The "last hour" is one of the telltale signs that at least part of the Antichrist expectation in 1 John 2,18 derives directly from Daniel and not only indirectly through the synoptic discourse and 2 Thessalonians or an oral tradition deriving from those two sources. The very fact that part of 1 John 2,18 is a development in some way of the synoptic eschatological discourse and 2 Thessalonians 2, both of which are dependent on and likely indirectly mediate Daniel tradition to 1 John 2,18, makes it at least plausible, and we think likely, that John may have been spurred on to go back to Daniel itself and pick up on the eschatological use of "hour" in Daniel 8-12 (OG).

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<sup>38</sup> LIEU, *Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, 87-88.

## SUMMARY

This article argues that the “last hour” in 1 John 2,18 is best understood against the Old Testament background of Daniel 8,12. In particular, the only eschatological uses of “hour” (ὥρα) in all of the Greek Old Testament occur in the “Old Greek” of Dan 8,17.19; 11,35.40; 12,1. There the “hour” (ὥρα) refers to the specific eschatological time when the opponent of God’s people will attempt to deceive them. John sees Daniel’s prophecy as beginning to be fulfilled in the deceptive work of the Antichrist(s) who has come among the churches to which he is writing.

# ANIMADVERSIONES

## **Self-Abasement as an Expression of Thanks in the Hebrew Bible<sup>1</sup>**

### I. Introduction

In 2 Sam 9,8, when Mephibosheth responds to David's offer of a royal pension (the right to eat at court), he says, after doing obeisance:

“What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?”<sup>2</sup>

Earlier in David's career, Abigail responds similarly to David's proposal to marry her:

She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, “Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” (1 Sam 25,41)

What is the intent behind such statements? Obviously the person abases him/herself to the hearer but why do it? I wish to answer these questions by arguing that Israelites tended to abase themselves when they gave thanks for a favour received or request granted. By doing this, they avoided expressing indebtedness to whoever gave the request/favour.

Self-abasement occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible. The most common example is the use of master-slave deference (אֲדֹנָי, “my lord”; שפחה / אמה / עבדך, “your female servant [slave] / your male servant [slave]”), frequently recognized as humble speech<sup>3</sup>. 1 Sam 25,41 has a particularly strong form of this language, using

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of papers presented at the Second Annual Australasian Christian Conference for the Church and the Academy, Brisbane, Australia, 29 June – 2 July 2010; and at the Ancient History Research Seminars, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, 8 Oct 2010. I wish to thank Dr Stephen Llewelyn and Dr Tom Hillard for reviewing previous drafts and for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> English translations are from the *NRSV* unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. W. ZIMMERLI – J. JEREMIAS, *The Servant of God* (SBT; trans. H. Knight, J. Jeremias and others; London 1965) 15; H. RINGGREN –

שפחה (“female slave”) metaphorically in addition to אִמְתְּךָ, as do Pss 86,16 and 116,16, in which בֶּן־אִמְתְּךָ (“son of your slave woman”) parallels עֶבֶדְךָ. The use of כָּלֵב (“dog”) for self-abasement (1 Sam 24,15[14]<sup>4</sup>; 2 Sam 3,8; 9,8; 2 Kgs 8,13), though infrequent, is also noteworthy since it is also used as invective against others (Deut 23,18; 1 Sam 17,43; 2 Sam 16,9; Pss 22,17[16].21[20]; Isa 56,10-11). Both uses of כָּלֵב have a long pedigree, being found in Mari texts and the Amarna letters<sup>5</sup>. The use of כָּלֵב for self-abasement is also found in the Lachish letters (2,3-4; 5,3-4; 6,2-3)<sup>6</sup>, thus כָּלֵב in this context should be considered to be stock language. Likewise, the use of master-slave deference dates back to at least the Sargonic period, was widely used in the Ancient Near East through to the Persian period<sup>7</sup>, and is found frequently in the Hebrew Bible, so should be considered to be customary language. Other forms of abasing or belittling of oneself also occur (e.g. Ex 3,11; Ruth 2,13; 1 Sam 9,21; 17,43; 18,18.23; 2 Sam 3,8; 7,18; Isa 6,5; Jer 1,6).

Self-abasement is used for a variety of reasons. It can be used to reject significance (Ex 3,11; Ruth 2,13; 1 Sam 18,18.23; 24,15[14]; 2 Sam 7,18; Isa 6,5; Jer 1,6), to claim significance (Gen

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H. SIMIAN-YOFRE – U. RÜTERWÖRDEN, “עֶבֶד ‘ābad; עֶבְדָּה ‘ebed; עֲבָדָה ‘bōdā”, *TDOT* X, 392-393; *HALOT* II, 775. This is acknowledged by most scholarship.

<sup>4</sup> References are from the MT with English Bible references given in square brackets.

<sup>5</sup> For invective, see, e.g. EA 71, 75, 85, 130, 137 (Amarna letters); ARM I 27.28 (Mari). For self-abasement, see e.g. EA 60, 61, 314-325 (very common in the Amarna letters). For discussion, see D.W. THOMAS, “Kelebh ‘Dog’: Its Origin and Some Usages of it in the Old Testament”, *VT* 10 (1960) 410-427, here 415.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion, see THOMAS, “Kelebh ‘Dog’”, 410-427; J.M. GALÁN, “What is He, the Dog”, *UF* 25 (1993) 173-180; G.W. COATS, “Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas”, *JBL* 89 (1972) 14-26; J.M. HUTTON, “‘Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog’: Self-Abasement and Invective in the Amarna letters, the Lachish Letters, and 2 Sam 3:8”, *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 15/16 (2002/2003) 2-18; cf. E.J. BRIDGE, “Polite Language in the Lachish Letters”, *VT* 60 (2010) 518-534, here 525-527.

<sup>7</sup> See P. MICHALOWSKI, *Letters from Early Mesopotamia* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World 3; Atlanta, GA 1993) §§ 6, 24-25, 30, 75-79, 97 (Sargonic and Ur III letters; pre 2000 BCE); A.E. COWLEY, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford 1923) 30, 37, 38 (Elephantine letters; 420-410 BCE).

47,9; 1 Sam 17,43; 2 Sam 3,8)<sup>8</sup>, to express surprise (Ruth 2,10; 1 Sam 9,21; 2 Kgs 8,13), to deny being a threat (1 Sam 24,15[14]), and to express thanks (Gen 32,11[10]; 1 Sam 25,41; 2 Sam 7,18; 9,8; 16,4; 14,22; 1 Kgs 3,7; Ps 116,16; Ruth 2,13). This study will focus on the use of self-abasement in expressing thanks partly because, as the references show, it is a common use for self-abasement. Furthermore, it stands in contrast with direct expressions of thanks in the Hebrew Bible.

It will be argued that people in the Hebrew Bible use self-abasement to other people to both highlight the hearer's magnanimity for a favourable response to a request or having received a favour and avoid expressing obligation to the hearer. When the same language is used in thanks to God, however, context indicates obligation to God occurs or has occurred and the language instead highlights God's magnanimity and can form part of a strategy to motivate God to answer a request. Narrative texts (Genesis, Judg-2 Kgs, Ruth) will be focused on, since it is primarily in this genre that self-abasement is used to express thanks. In contrast are Psalms, 1-2 Chronicles and Ezra-Neh, in which direct expressions of thanks are found as well as terms for thanks. In addition, thanksgiving in Psalms is usually accompanied by promises to do something, such as to go to the temple and/or to offer sacrifices.

The distinguishing between the use of self-abasement to express thanks and direct expressions of thanks matches an observation made by Brown and Levinson in their theory of politeness: when people give thanks, they will either express it in self-abasement, or express obligation to the other<sup>9</sup>. This observation is part of Brown and Levinson's argument that all people have "face"; that is, people have a sense of honour or respect from others. In addition, Brown and Levinson argue that people adjust

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<sup>8</sup> In Gen 47,9, Jacob's dismissal of his long life (130 years) adds to his superiority to Pharaoh in the matter of long life, and is thus able to bless Pharaoh. In 1 Sam 17,43 and 2 Sam 3,8, Goliath and Abner respond rhetorically to insults, whether expressed (by Ish-bosheth to Abner) or implied (David intends to fight Goliath only lightly armed). See HUTTON, "'Abdi-Aširta'", 4, 12-14.

<sup>9</sup> P. BROWN - S.C. LEVINSON, *Politeness*. Some Universals in Language Usage (SIS 4; Cambridge 1987) 67.

their language to respect the “face” of those they communicate with; that is, they use polite language of some description<sup>10</sup>.

When speakers in the Bible use self-abasement to express thanks, they in effect reduce their face before the hearer. This works on a principle similar to deference: the use of self-deprecatative language places the hearer in the role of higher status to the speaker<sup>11</sup>. In effect, self-abasement is an extreme form of deference. Prominent in the biblical texts is that indebtedness or obligation to the hearer is not expressed. This, with the contrast of direct thanks coupled with expressions of obligation, matches with cultural-anthropological study on gift giving; namely, in many cultures, the receiver of a gift is obligated to the gift giver<sup>12</sup>. This study argues that people in the Hebrew Bible use self-abasement to other people to both highlight the hearer’s magnanimity for a favourable response to a request or having received a favour and avoid expressing obligation to the hearer. When the same language is used in thanks to God, however, context indicates obligation to God occurs or has occurred and therefore the language highlights God’s magnanimity alone. Such language can also form part of a strategy to motivate God to answer a request.

My discussion first focuses on the use of self-abasement to express thanks to people, then the use of self-abasement to express

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<sup>10</sup> For a description of the theory, critique, and its applicability to the Bible, see E.J. BRIDGE, “Polite Israel and Impolite Edom”, *JSOT* 35 (2010) 77-88; and BRIDGE, “Polite Language”, 522-524. For a good overview of the theory, also with critique, see D.J. GOLDSMITH, “Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory”, *Explaining Communication. Contemporary Theories and Exemplars* (eds. B.B. WHALEY – W. SAMTER) (LEA’s Communication Series; Mahwah, NJ 2007) 219-236. Others who have used the theory for analysing biblical texts are E.J. REVELL, *The Designation of the Individual. Expressive Usage in Biblical Narrative* (CBET 14; Kampen 1996) 267-274; J.H. COETZEE, “Politeness Strategies in the So-called ‘Enemy Psalms’: An Inquiry into Israelite Prayer Rhetoric”, *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (eds. S.E. PORTER – D.L. STAMPS) (JSOTSS 195; Sheffield 2002) 209-236; and B. ESTELLE, “The Use of Deferential Language in the Arsames Correspondence and Biblical Aramaic Compared”, *Maarav* 13 (2006) 43-74.

<sup>11</sup> BROWN – LEVINSON, *Politeness*, 178.

<sup>12</sup> See M. MAUSS, *The Gift* (trans. W.D. HALLS) (New York, NY 1990). See M.W. HAMILTON, “At Whose Table? Stories of Elites and Social Climbers in 1-2 Samuel”, *VT* 59 (2009) 513-532, here 519, for an application of Marcell’s theory to biblical texts.

thanks to God. Key texts are discussed for both situations. This approach allows for similarities in the two contexts to be shown as well as differences.

## II. Self-abasement as an expression of thanks to humans

The first text to be discussed, 2 Sam 9,8, presents some difficulties. Here, Mephibosheth, grandson of Saul and son of Jonathan, responds to David's offer of a royal pension (2 Sam 9, especially v. 7). On the surface, Mephibosheth appears to be giving gratitude. But other texts in 2 Samuel suggest Mephibosheth may deny being a threat to David. This possibility shows that categorising self-abasement into categories such as "thanks", "to deny being a threat", etc., can be subjective.

Mephibosheth's statement of self-abasement is:

"What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?"

The self-abasement is carried by the phrase, "dead dog" (כלב מת)<sup>13</sup>. "Dead dog" is a metaphor that refers to his status as a descendent of Saul's family, and, in line with common ancient Near Eastern practice when dynasties change, at risk of death by David. Mephibosheth uses the term to convey unworthiness. He evokes an association that dogs are unclean and contemptible<sup>14</sup>. That is, he reduces his face to highlight David's generosity in offering him a royal pension, and thus increases David's face. Note that he expresses no obligation to David. This becomes a factor in the wider narrative when his servant/slave Ziba accuses him of treason in 16,1-4 during Absalom's rebellion, which requires him to defend his loyalty to David in 19,26-29. As the story stands, Mephibosheth's language should be interpreted as genuine thanks, and his lack of expressed obligation to David a typical component of this, as will be shown below to be the case for other biblical

<sup>13</sup> The exact form is הכלב המת, since "dead dog" is the object of the verb, "you looked upon".

<sup>14</sup> The Amarna and Lachish letters use כלב in the same way. See THOMAS, "Kelebh", 410-427; HUTTON, "'Abdi-Aširta'", 2-18; and BRIDGE, "Polite Language", 527-525.

characters. Mephibosheth's self-abasement also has the positive effect of making the hearer (David) out to be a magnanimous and generous person, because Mephibosheth constructs an identity of an inconsequential person who has received attention far beyond what he is worth. Such praise may induce the hearer to do more acts of kindness. Yet, Mephibosheth's lack of expressed obligation to David indicates an attempt to avoid being in a patron-client relationship with him. That is, he attempts to counter the implications of obligation inherent in receiving gifts.

The problem with taking 2 Sam 9 at face value is that David's kindness to Mephibosheth may be two-edged. David can fulfil his obligation to Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father (1 Sam 20), but at the same time he can keep a watch on this potentially significant figure in the Saulide house<sup>15</sup>. This interpretation is coupled with references in 2 Samuel in which it can be argued that a purge of Saul's descendants has taken place prior to the events of 2 Sam 9. In 2 Sam 16,7-8, Shimei, a relative of Saul, accuses David of having killed descendants of Saul. In 2 Sam 9,3, David acknowledges there are few remaining descendants of Saul. In 2 Sam 19,28, Mephibosheth states that his "father's house was doomed to death". These texts allow for the common opinion that the massacre of Saulides narrated in 2 Sam 21,1-14 has already happened<sup>16</sup>. This interpretation is similar, on the surface, to David's use of *כלב מה* in 1 Sam 24,15[14] in which David denies being a threat to Saul when on the run from Saul. Here, David

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g. R. ALTER, *The David Story*. A Translation with Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel (New York 1999) 243; J. MAUCHLINE, *1 and 2 Samuel* (NCB; London 1971) 241; and HERTZBERG, *I & II Samuel*, 299-301. J. BALDWIN, *1 and 2 Samuel*. An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC; Leicester 1988) 227-228, understands the threat to be Mica, Mephibosheth's son (2 Sam 9,12). D.G. FIRTH, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Apollos OT Commentary; Nottingham 2009) 402-404, though rejecting that David keeps watch on Mephibosheth, recognizes that David prevents any pro-Saulide movement from occurring.

<sup>16</sup> Argued by, e.g., P.K. McCARTER, *II Samuel*. A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary (AB 9; New York 1984) 260-265; H.W. HERTZBERG, *I & II Samuel*. A Commentary (OTL; London 1964); L.G. PERDUE, " 'Is there Anyone left of the House of Saul ...?' Ambiguity and the Characterization of David in the Succession Narrative", *JSOT* 30 (1984) 67-84, here 75. FIRTH, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 402, 503, remains doubtful, though acknowledges the possibility. Note that the narrator is careful to indicate the purge is not because of a change of dynasty *per se*.



points out he is not a threat to Saul, proved by not taking the opportunity to kill him. However, David's use of *כלב מה* suggests he constructs an identity of inconsequence, helped by the parallel phrase, "a single flea". It is as though David constructs two identities in his conversation with Saul in the cave: an identity of no threat to Saul, proved by his actions; and a second identity of inconsequence to Saul, because he is not a threat to Saul.

This is also the case in Abishai's use of *כלב מה* in 2 Sam 16,9 to refer to Shimei. Here, Abishai engages in invective to indicate contempt for Shimei. But his contempt works because Shimei is an insignificant person, since Abishai can simply "cut off his head". Therefore, Shimei is no threat to David which is recognized by David in his response to Abishai to "let him alone" (v. 11). There is a difference, however, between 1 Sam 24,15[14] and 2 Sam 16,9. In the former, David's proof that he is no threat to Saul makes him inconsequential to Saul; but in the latter, Shimei's inconsequence (he is a lone protester) makes him no threat to David.

In relation to 1 Sam 24,15[14] and 2 Sam 16,9, Mephibosheth's intent at face value for using *כלב מה* matches Abishai's use of the phrase in 2 Sam 16,9: *כלב מה* is an expression of inconsequence. However, if David intends to keep an eye on Mephibosheth to prevent him spearheading pro-Saulide support or being used as a figurehead for pro-Saulide support, then *כלב מה* matches David's use of the phrase in 1 Sam 24,15[14]: *כלב מה* is an expression of downplaying one's threat to the hearer. However, later in the narrative, in 2 Sam 19,24-30, Mephibosheth focuses on being given a royal pension (v. 28) rather than responding to Shimei's accusation of treason. Therefore, it is more likely that Mephibosheth intends an identity of inconsequence and so uses *כלב מה* to express thanks. Any idea of "no threat" is secondary. But since he avoids expressing obligation inherent in receiving a gift, his use of *כלב מה* has an effect similar to David's use of the phrase in speaking to Saul in 1 Sam 24,15[14]: he seeks to maintain his independence<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> For a different opinion on this topic, see A. GIANITO, "Variations in Biblical Hebrew", *Bib* 77 (1996) 493-508, here 501, who understands *כלב מה* to be a political metaphor of submission. This is certainly the case in the Amarna letters (e.g. EA 201, 202, 247, 314-316, EA 319, 320, 322-325, EA 378) and in Egyptian metaphoric use of "dog" — J.M. GALAN, "What is He, the Dog", *UF* 25 (1993) 173-180, (which Gianto cites). However, I have already cited Biblical

Self-abasement when used as thanks increases the face of the giver, and in doing so avoids obligation to the gift giver.

A second text in which self-abasement is used to express thanks is Ruth's statement to Boaz in Ruth 2,13:

"May I continue to find favour in your sight, my lord, you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants".

The clause, "I am not one of your servants", is the statement of self abasement. It refers to her status as a foreigner, stated in a previous turn in the dialogue, "Why have I found favour in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner [נכריה]?" (Ruth 2,10). Ruth, by drawing attention to her foreign origins, implies she has no right to be specially treated, which is what Boaz has been doing<sup>18</sup>. In effect, she reduces her face so as to increase Boaz's face, which highlights Boaz's generosity. In Boaz' case, he has favoured a person who has little legal status in the community. No obligation is expressed, which is in keeping with her role as a destitute gleaner who is dependent on landholders' generosity for sustenance<sup>19</sup>.

However, as the story proceeds, obligation is played upon by both characters. In 3,9, in the night-time scene at the threshing floor, Ruth attempts to obligate Boaz to her in her request that he act as גאל ("kinsman redeemer"). He in turn reverses this by claiming in v. 10 that her request is a form of obligation to him, since she is showing חסד ("kindness/loyalty") to him<sup>20</sup>. This change of relationship is noteworthy. Ruth has moved from constructing an identity of an unworthy low-status foreigner to con-

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texts in which כלב is used as a put down of others, a use which also occurs in the Amarna letters (EA 85,130, 134, 137, 281; see also BRIDGE, "Polite Language", 526-527). David uses כלב מלך to maintain independence from Saul even as he respects Saul's legitimacy; and Mephibosheth uses כלב מלך to avoid obligation to David.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. K.L. YOUNGER, "Two Comparative Notes on the Book of Ruth", *JANES* 26 (1998) 121-132, here 127-128.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lev 19,9-10 and Deut 24,19-20, where gleaning by the destitute is prescribed.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Y. BERGER, "Ruth and the David Bathsheba Story: Allusions and Contrasts", *JSOT* 33 (2009) 433-452, here 443.

structing an identity of kinship with Boaz<sup>21</sup>. This involves reciprocal obligations between the two<sup>22</sup>, which no doubt explains why Boaz calls her request an instance of חסד: Ruth seeks to remain within the family she has married into. It is also noteworthy that there is no narration of thanks by Ruth after Boaz's promise to act in accordance with her request (3,10-13). Is this an omission by the narrator, or does it reflect Boaz's acceptance of her newly claimed status<sup>23</sup>? Whatever is the case, it highlights Ruth's thanks in 2,13 with its lack of obligation to Boaz, because in 3,9 she is obligating herself to Boaz.

Ruth's repeated use of "your servant" (שפחהך) in Ruth 2,13 indicates that conventional master-slave defence can also be used as self-abasement. A noteworthy example occurs in 2 Sam 14,22:

Joab prostrated himself with his face to the ground and did obeisance, and blessed the king, and Joab said, "Today your servant (עבדך) knows that I have found favour in your sight, my lord the king, in that the king granted the request of his servant (עבדו)".

At first sight it seems there is no self-abasement on the part of Joab. His obeisance and use of master-slave deference are in keeping with a subject or an official speaking to the king (cf. Mephibosheth in 2 Sam 9,6; Barzillai, Ziba and Mephibosheth in 2 Sam 19; and the Tekoite woman in 2 Sam 14,4). However, in light of the wider narrative, his obeisance and deference is surprisingly polite. Normally he is portrayed as blunt to David and/or

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. GIANITO, "Variations", 501, who notes the change in language, especially Ruth's use of the second person singular אַתָּה, arguing that it anticipates the husband-wife relationship at the end of the Book.

<sup>22</sup> This rests on the assumption that cultural-anthropological studies of traditional Mediterranean societies, usually applied to the New Testament and classical societies, can be applied here. See B.J. MALINA, "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: a Guide for U.S. Consumers", *BTB* 19 (1989) 127-141; S.S. BARTCHY "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: the Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of siblings", *BTB* 29 (1999) 68-78; B.J. MALINA, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY 1993) 122-125; P.P. ESLER, *Galatians* (London 1998) 218-220.

<sup>23</sup> C.f. R.M. JOHNSON, *The Words in their Mouths. A Linguistic and Literary Analysis of the Dialogues in the Book of Ruth* (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University; Ann Arbor, MI 1993) 147-150, who draws attention to Boaz's control of the conversation.

critical of him (2 Sam 3,24-25; 19,5-7)<sup>24</sup>. As with Mephibosheth in 9,8 and Ruth (Ruth 2,13), Joab does not express obligation. This is also in keeping with 2 Samuel in which he normally takes an independent view of things from his king, even though his position automatically implies loyalty to David<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, this unusual-for-Joab obeisance and deference in 2 Sam 14,22 is designed to increase David's "face", needed after his coercion of David through the Tekoite woman to recall Absalom from exile<sup>26</sup>.

A similar use of conventional deference as self-abasement to express thanks occurs in Ziba's response to David in 2 Sam 16,4b, after David has given him Mephibosheth's assets (v. 4a):

"I do obeisance; let me find favour in your sight, my lord the king".

Ziba has claimed that Mephibosheth is entertaining treason during Absalom's rebellion (v. 3; cf. 19,26-27). Since Ziba's statement uses only conventional language, it can be argued that he does not use self-abasement. However, as for Joab, it functions as a statement of thanks<sup>27</sup>. Like Joab, Ziba does not express obligation to David. That is, conventional deference and obeisance carries a reduction in "face" and highlights David's "face" as a generous person. If there is obligation, the narrative shows it is incumbent on David. David, by accepting Ziba's gift of food (16,2) — not narrated — has indebted himself to Ziba, as studies on gift-giving would predict. The Hebrew Bible elsewhere acknowledges obligations inherent in accepting gifts (e.g. Prov 18,16 and 21,14),

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<sup>24</sup> Joab's message to David in 2 Sam 11,19-21 can also be interpreted as being critical of David. See K. BODNER, "Is Joab a Reader-Response Critic?", *JSOT* 27 (2002) 19-35.

<sup>25</sup> It is frequently asserted that David used murder and intrigue to gain the throne, with Joab playing a large role. See e.g. B. HALPERN, *David's Secret Demons*. Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King (Grand Rapids, MI 2001); J. VANDERKAM, "Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal", *JBL* 99 (1980) 521-539; N.P. LEMCHE, "David's Rise", *JSOT* 10 (1978) 2-25; and M.J. STEUSSY, *David*. Biblical Portraits of Power (Columbia, SC 1999).

<sup>26</sup> The MT contains a *Qere* reading of עבדך for עבדו at the end of v. 22. However, עבדו works well in the context by placing Joab's thanks fully into third-person speech, which dissociates David from the face loss he has faced by being manipulated.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. FIRTH, *Samuel*, 459: "Ziba is awarded the estate, which he flatteringly accepts".

shown in a practical fashion in David's giving spoils of war to the leaders of Judah in 1 Sam 30,26-31 and their subsequent acceptance of him as king of Judah in 2 Sam 2,4<sup>28</sup>.

The contexts of Joab and Ziba's use of conventional master-slave language and deference as self-abasement show that self-abasement, even when used to express thanks, may be designed to convey more than just thanks. Joab uses it to increase David's "face" after manipulating him through the Tekoite woman to have Absalom recalled to Jerusalem. Ziba uses it in the context of the dynamics of gift giving to get his master's assets. In both cases, identity construction has taken place: Joab portrays himself as a loyal official, and Ziba portrays himself as a loyal subject. But both have manipulated David, and therefore need to "give the addressee [here, David] an 'out', a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced"<sup>29</sup>.

Probably the most extreme use of self-abasement to express thanks is Abigail's statement in 1 Sam 25,41 when she responds to David's proposal to marry her:

"See! Your (female) servant [אמתך] is a female slave [שפחה] to wash the feet of the servants [עבדים] of my lord [אדני]." (my translation)

In this statement, אמתך and אדני represent conventional deference, used prominently in vv. 23-31, and שפחה is the term of self-abasement. Abigail puts herself in the position of a slave-servant, clearly counterfactual to her status as a wealthy woman with five female attendants (v. 42)<sup>30</sup>. Her statement can be considered as an expression of thanks because earlier in the narrative, when she pleads with David to spare her husband's life, she closes her

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<sup>28</sup> Note that Ziba is not narrated as doing obeisance to David, only saying so. This is unusual in 1-2 Samuel, in which characters are narrated as normally prostrating themselves to the ruler (e.g. 1 Sam 25,23-24; 2 Sam 1,2: 9,6.8; 14,4.22; 18,28). Ziba's statement is characteristic of a message rather than the face-to-face interaction portrayed in the narrative (cf. the formula, "I fall on my face/at your feet ...", in Amarna and Ugaritic letters).

<sup>29</sup> BROWN – LEVINSON, *Politeness*, 70.

<sup>30</sup> "Counterfactual" comes from the notion, "counterfactual scenario". A "counterfactual scenario" occurs when two terms or concepts which are categorically different are used for effect by the communicator; or a term or statement is used opposite to what is expected — L.D. RITCHIE, *Context and Connection in Metaphor* (Basingstoke, NY 2006) 159.

speech with a request to be “remembered” by David (v. 31). This should be understood as an indirect request that David marry her<sup>31</sup>. By using self-abasement, Abigail accepts a reduction in “face” which has the effect of highlighting David’s proposal as a generous favour. In contrast to Mephibosheth, Joab and Ziba, Abigail’s use of שפחה connotes some obligation to David, emphasized by the addition of the dependent clause, “to wash the feet of the servants of my lord”. The metaphoricity of this statement is debated<sup>32</sup>, but I suggest it refers to the inherent obligation of a wife to her husband rather than to treaty language, whether between David’s household and hers, or representative of the Jesse and Calebite clans making a treaty<sup>33</sup>. That is, Abigail’s statement, “a female slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord”, reflects minimal and conventional obligation, if any, and so should be thought of as genuine self-abasement that expresses thanks.

To summarize, the use of self-abasement to express thanks to another person primarily serves to downplay the speaker’s “face” (i.e. accept a reduction in respect or honour relative to the hearer) in order to increase the “face” of the hearer (i.e. increase the hearer’s respect or honour relative to the speaker). It has the effect of highlighting the magnanimity of the hearer. Socially, the relationship between receiver and giver is kept unequal, and the giver is shown to be one who has power over the receiver. However, the use of self-abasement means the speaker avoids

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<sup>31</sup> In Abigail’s speech (1 Sam 25,23-31), neither her request that David spare Nabal nor her request that David marry her (if Nabal dies) are expressed directly. The latter is an “indirect request” and the former request is an “off-record” (i.e. implied) request, which is considered to be very polite (BROWN – LEVINSON, *Politeness*, 69, 132-145).

<sup>32</sup> For example, D.V. EDELMAN, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSS 121; Sheffield 1991) 216, 220, argues שפחה indicates sexual availability on Abigail’s part to David; É. LIPÍŃSKI, “Kinship Terminology in 1 Sam 25.40-42”, *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 7 (1994) 12-16, here 16, argues that Abigail says she acts like a housemaid; and R. KLEIN, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco, TX 1986) 252, argues Abigail’s language is simply that of hospitality (cf. Gen 18,3; 19,2).

<sup>33</sup> E.g. J. LOZOVYY, *Saul, Doeg, Nabal and “the Son of Jesse”*. Readings in 1 Samuel 16-25 (LHB/OTS 497; London 2009) 176-177; J.D. LEVENSON – B. HALPERN, “The Political Import of David’s Marriages”, *JBL* 99 (1980) 509-523; M. GARSIEL, *The First Book of Samuel. A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan 1985) 127-128.

expressing obligation to the hearer, which normally happens when gifts or favours are accepted. Occasionally, self-abasement is counterfactual to the speaker's situation. This occurs when the speaker is an equal or social superior to the hearer. Such language adds to the increase in "face" of the hearer, by portraying the speaker as unworthy to have received what the hearer has given to him/her.

The use of self-abasement to express thanks in biblical narrative suggests this was an aspect of ancient Israelite culture. This can be confirmed with an analysis of the use of the formula, *מי עבדך כלב כי* ("What is your servant, [but] a dog, that ...?") in the Lachish letters (2,3-4; 5,3-4; 6,2-3). The formula is often understood to express criticism of the addressee, who is also the senders' immediate superior<sup>34</sup>. However, it is better to understand the expression as expressing thanks since many of the Lachish letters mention the prior forwarding of letters by the addressee to the senders. Lachish 6 goes further: the sender shows he has been asked to read such letters<sup>35</sup>. The senders' intent is to imply that the addressee is magnanimous, while avoiding direct expressions of obligation to him. As it is, the senders are formal subordinates of the addressee and therefore already "obligated" to him by virtue of their positions; thus expressions of obligation are not needed in their missives. Still, the use of *מי עבדך כלב כי* in these letters shows that even in a formal work relationship — here, a military context — there was a culture of the avoidance of expressing obligation when giving thanks. If military posts in ancient Israel were a result of royal patronage (cf. 1 Sam 8,12; 22,8; 2 Chr 11,23)<sup>36</sup>, then the lack of expressions of obligation to superiors for favour becomes all the more noteworthy. Under a patronage system, it would be

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<sup>34</sup> E.g. COATS, "Self-Abasement", 18; J.M. LINDENBERGER, *Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Letters* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World 14; Atlanta, GA 2003) 117.

<sup>35</sup> BRIDGE, "Polite language", 526; B. THOMAS, "The Language of Politeness in Ancient Hebrew Letters", *Hebrew Studies* 50 (2009) 17-39, here 30-31; D. PARDEE, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (SBL SBS 15; Chico, CA 1982) 80.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Lemche's understanding of ancient Near Eastern societies, including ancient Israel, based on the studies of M. Liverani. See N.P. LEMCHE, "From Patronage Society to Patronage Society", *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (eds. V. FRITZ – P.R. DAVIES) (Sheffield 1996) 106-120.

expected that inferiors would flatter their superiors in the hope of continued favour and advancement.

### III. Self-abasement as an expression of thanks to God

When thanks is expressed to God, the situation is more complicated. In contrast to the sole use of self-abasement to people, both self-abasement and direct expressions of thanks are used. But the two forms correlate to genre. Self-abasement is used primarily in narrative (e.g. Genesis, Joshua – 2 Kings), and direct expressions of thanks are mostly found in Psalms and the songs, rituals and administration of the temple found in 1-2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah<sup>37</sup>. In Psalms, expressions of thanks are frequently accompanied by promises to do something, such as to go to the “house of the LORD” and/or offer sacrifices. That is, obligation to God is expressed. This is frequent; see, for example, Pss 5,8[7]; 16,7-8; 22,26[25]; 23,6; 27,6; 54,8[6]; 56,12; 61,9[8]; 66,13-15; 116,12-19.

With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;  
I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good (Ps 54,8[6])  
So I will always sing praises to your name,  
as I pay my vows day after day (Ps 61,9[8]; cf. Ps 22,26[25])

Such obligation to God is to be expected. Psalms are used in the worship of God, a setting that presupposes a desire on the part of worshippers to express loyalty to God and to perform whatever obligations such loyalty requires.

There is, however, a rare appearance of self-abasement in the context of thanks in Ps 116, a thanksgiving psalm. The particular expression is found in v. 16: “the child of your serving girl” (בֶּן־אִמְתֶּךָ; “son of your slave woman”). But since Ps 116 clearly expresses obligation to God (vv. 12-14, 17-19), and the exact phrase, “the child of your serving girl”, is also used in connection with requests in Ps 86,16, a lament psalm, the question can be

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<sup>37</sup> E.g., ידה, “to praise / give thanks”; תודה, “thanksgiving”; ברך, “to bless”; see e.g. Pss 44,9[8]; 61,9[8]; 104,1; 105,1; 106,1; 107,1; 109,30; 111,1; 115,18; 134,1; 135,19-21; 136,1.26; 144,1; and 147,7. ידה is also found in Gen 49,8 and 2 Sam 22,5 (songs), and in Gen 29,35.



raised about the use of self-abasement in Psalms. This matter cannot be addressed here, but is something that should be explored<sup>38</sup>.

Likewise, in narrative, a rare example of the obligation side of thanks is found in 2 Kgs 5,17-18. Here, the foreign military captain Naaman promises to worship YHWH because of his healing from leprosy. Naaman's promise, however, comes after a rebuff by Elisha for his wish to pay for Elisha's help (vv. 15-16). Paying for a religious service is a common phenomenon (see, e.g. Num 22,7.17.37; 24,10-13; 1 Sam 9,6-10; 2 Kgs 14,1-4; parodied in Ezek 13,19 and Micah 3,5), but Naaman's commitment to ongoing devotion solely to YHWH indicates he has moved from payment for service to obligation to YHWH in similar fashion to the speakers in the psalms noted above. יָדָה also appears in Leah's comment after Judah's birth, "This time I will praise (אֲדָה) the LORD" (Gen 29,35), which functions to provide the reason for the name, Judah. Leah's language, however, has the effect of obligating her to YHWH. But it is not clear in the patriarchal narratives how vows and promises to God were fulfilled. For example, Jacob's promise to give God one-tenth of all God will give to him (Gen 28,22) is not narrated as being carried out. In Gen 35,6-15, when Jacob finally fulfils his vows in 28,22, all that is narrated is he built an altar (35,7), set up a pillar and poured a libation on it (35,14). An altar presumes that Jacob made sacrifices, but this is not narrated.

The key examples of self-abasement being used to express thanks to God in narrative texts are 2 Sam 7,18; Gen 32,10-13[9-12]; and 1 Kgs 3,5-9. However, unlike for self-abasement to humans, obligation to God is presupposed in the context of each text.

2 Sam 7,18 is David's introduction to his prayer of thanks (2 Sam 7,18-29) after being promised by YHWH that he would found a dynasty (vv. 5-16).

"Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" (v. 18)

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<sup>38</sup> A start towards this is provided in E.J. BRIDGE, "Loyalty, Dependency and Status with YHWH: the use of *bd* in the Psalms", *VT* 59 (2009) 360-378, here 368-374, in which it is argued that the common form of deference עֲבָדךָ ("your servant") is used to motivate God to answer requests favourably.

David's question refers back to his childhood as an unknown person in Bethlehem<sup>39</sup>, and is counterfactual to his situation: he is the king, and has just received a promise of an enduring dynasty. In similar fashion to people expressing thanks to other people, David does not express indebtedness to God. In effect, David speaks to YHWH as though YHWH was a person (distances himself from obligation to YHWH), but loyalty and obligation to YHWH have already been narrated as occurring. David speaks as a pious individual.

In Gen 32,10-13 [9-12], when Jacob prays for deliverance from Esau, he says:

"I am not worthy [קטן] of the least of all the steadfast love [חסד] and from all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant."  
(v. 11[10])

חסד refers to Jacob's wealth which he gained while working for Laban, which he has already acknowledged as being given to him by God (31,5-13). קטן (literally, "small") carries the self-abasement. This is counterfactual to Jacob's present situation of wealth (30,43), head of a huge household (including servants/slaves) and equal to Laban (proved by the dialogue in 31,26-42). With קטן, Jacob reduces his "standing" before God and so highlights God as generous: God has favoured someone who is of no importance, a metaphorical import of קטן, and the basis of the *NRSV*'s translation of קטן as "unworthy". However, the metaphorical meaning of קטן, "unworthy", also alludes to his cheating Esau of the eldest son's blessing (ch 27), the point of his elaborate preparations in Gen 32 to meet Esau, and the main topic of conversation once he meets him (33,1-17). Thus there is a play on קטן: it is counterfactual to Jacob's present status, but factual to his situation of having cheated Esau. Jacob's self-abasement also prepares for his request of v. 12[11] to be delivered from Esau; so not only does it express thanks, but it is also part of his strategy to motivate God to answer favourably<sup>40</sup>. Jacob's strategy is that God continue his generosity to him by delivering him from Esau. Jacob, like David in 2 Sam 7,18, does not express obligation to God, but he has already done

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 18,18.23 where David uses the same self-abasement to reject Saul's offer of marriage into the royal family.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the use of עבדך "your servant" in Psalms (BRIDGE, "Loyalty", 368-374).

so much earlier in the narrative (Gen 28,20-22). However, God will have to remind him later of this obligation (35,1). Thus, like in David's situation, there is a tension of avoidance of expressions of obligation in thanks to God yet being already in obligation to God. But in Jacob's case it seems that obligating himself to God is not characteristic behaviour.

In Solomon's dream prayer of 1 Kgs 3,5-9, Solomon makes the statement,

"... I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in." (v. 7b)

"Little child" (נער קטן) carries the self-abasement. It is metaphoric, drawing upon the association of children as having little experience of life. This is counterfactual to Solomon's situation. 1 Kgs 1-2 and 1 Chr 23,1 and 29,22 indicate a period of co-regency with David, which means he already has some experience as a ruler. Even his request for wisdom (v. 9) is counterfactual since he has already been described as wise by David (1 Kgs 2,6-9). This counterfactual scenario that Solomon has created shows that his self-abasement for thanks has a rhetorical strategy. Like for Jacob in Gen 32,11[10], it is designed to motivate God to answer his request; here, for wisdom. Solomon's strategy is to create an identity of youth and inexperience and therefore a need for God's help to be an able ruler. Despite not expressing obligation to God in his prayer, obligation is expressed in v. 15 when he offers sacrifices to God after the dream. In comparison to 2 Sam 7,18 and Gen 32,11[10], only here is both self-abasement and obligation in thanks to God placed closely together. Solomon's self-abasement emphasizes God's graciousness and generosity, and his subsequent sacrifices emphasize his willingness to submit to God<sup>41</sup>.

To summarize, the use of self-abasement to express thanks to God functions in the same manner as the use of self-abasement to express thanks to humans. That is, the speaker downplays his "face" to highlight the magnanimity of God. In effect, God is viewed as similar to humans. However, the implication of avoiding expressions of obligation to God is not automatic, since all the contexts have the speaker having shown, or showing, obligation to

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<sup>41</sup> Though, as the narrative proceeds, this does not last. See 1 Kgs 11.

God in some fashion. Furthermore, the thanks expressed can be part of a strategy to motivate God to answer a request.

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To conclude, the use of self-abasement to express thanks in the Hebrew Bible highlights both the magnanimity of the one being thanked yet avoids the one giving the thanks expressing obligation to the one being thanked. In some cases, the avoidance of obligation is played upon in the wider narrative. When thanks is expressed to God, the obligation side of thanks, however, becomes present. Though the speaker does not expressly obligate himself to God, the contexts show that he has either already obligated himself, or will express obligation, to God. Consequently, rather than being used as avoiding obligation to God, self-abasement functions simply as an expression of highlighting God's magnanimity. In some cases, such highlighting of God's magnanimity is used as a rhetorical strategy to persuade God to answer a request.

It is recognized that the frequency of self-abasement as expressing thanks in the Hebrew Bible is relatively small, even though, as noted, self-abasement is a common feature of biblical language. This may mean that other means of expressing thanks may be discerned in the biblical texts. For example, in 1 Sam 25,32-35, David both blesses God and blesses Abigail to God, which allows him to avoid obligation to her, despite accepting her gift, and therefore her request that her husband Nabal and the men of her household be spared from death for Nabal's slight of him in vv. 10-11.

This difference between avoiding obligation to people yet willingness to be obligated to God matches an observation by Schwartz, who, in a discussion on social relationships as idealised by Josephus, Ben Sira and the rabbis, argues that the Pentateuchal laws tend "to ignore or disapprove of such relationships" along with servitude of one Israelite to another. The only dependency based relationship "embraced" in the laws is that "between God and Israel alone"<sup>42</sup>. It would appear from my study that biblical narrative is in keeping with the laws. Self-abasement is the mecha-

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<sup>42</sup> S. SCHWARTZ, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?* Reciprocity and

nism used in thanks by which non-patronage relationships between people are achieved, despite stratification in society being portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The presence of obligation to God, even when self-abasement is used to express thanks, shows that a dependency relationship with God is expected.

Does the Hebrew Bible reflect ancient Israelite practice on this matter? Since it is a literary text, it may not reflect actual practice<sup>43</sup>. However, the possibility that it does reflect actual practice remains open since documentary texts such as Hebrew language seals, the Lachish letters, the Meşad Hashavyahu plea, and Arad 40 confirm a use of master-slave deference in first temple period Israel that is the same as that in the Hebrew Bible. The use of כלב in the Lachish letters witnesses to the use of self-abasement to express thanks in at least one sector of Israelite society during the last few years of the kingdom of Judah (590-587 BCE). It may be that study into epigraphic remains from elsewhere in the ancient Near East might confirm whether other societies used self-abasement to express thanks. If this is found to have occurred, then it might be possible to argue the ancient Israelites shared in the regional culture and practiced the same. This is a matter that is worth further study.

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#### SUMMARY

Self-abasement is commonly used in the Hebrew Bible to express thanks, especially in narrative texts. Using aspects of politeness theory, it is found that, by using self-abasement, a speaker accepts a loss of face and so avoids indebtedness to the hearer, but at the same time increases the hearer's face by showing how gracious he was to favourably treat the speaker. It is a form of deference, a use of language that increases social distance between hearer and speaker. However, when self-abasement is also used to express thanks to God, avoidance of indebtedness is not in focus, rather God's magnanimity. In prayer, self-abasement is also used to motivate God to grant the request.

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Solidarity in Ancient Judaism (Princeton, NJ 2010) 167-168. Schwartz' thesis is that Ben Sira, Josephus and the early Rabbis eschewed patronage relationships.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. SCHWARTZ, *Were the Jews*, 175.

## The Implications of Grace for The Ethics of James

The Epistle of James is most commonly known as the epistle of works, and, given its emphasis on practical social action, it most deservedly earns a place in a discussion of the New Testament and ethics. The role of God, however, appears limited to various clichés, whether simply that “God wants people to act in a loving manner because Jesus taught so”, a focus on the potentially “legalistic” nature of James’s God, or ultimately a more complex discussion based on Jas 2,5 that “God has chosen the poor” and hates the rich (cf. Jas 5,1-6). None of these does justice to James as a wisdom text rooted firmly in the background of God’s gracious covenantal work.

Moreover, scholars have sidelined or oversimplified James, insisting that it has no theological depth. While Luther is perhaps justifiably infamous for his statements on James, he does not stand alone. Dibelius repeatedly emphasizes, “Jas has no ‘theology’”<sup>1</sup>, and Sophie Laws concurs that James is an ethical document with “no theological impulse”<sup>2</sup>. Such a simplistic rendering of James, however, tears the ethics of the text loose from any grounding, leaving it an essentially a-theological, a-Christian moral text of the sort any philosopher of the Greco-Roman world could have promoted<sup>3</sup>. Ironically, Christian ethicists have treated James similarly. Frank Matera’s *New Testament Ethics* contains one reference to James in the whole book<sup>4</sup>. Richard Hays has a mere 5 references to James in his *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, one of those in a footnote<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, Allen Verhey’s *The Great Reversal. Ethics and the New Testament* gives James four pages<sup>6</sup>. If, as Laws urges, James is “the most con-

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<sup>1</sup> M. DIBELIUS, *James* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1975) 21, again 48, 81.

<sup>2</sup> S. LAWS, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (BNTC; London 1980) 28.

<sup>3</sup> Some recent commentators have acknowledged that James is a profoundly theological text, e.g. D.J. MOO, *The Letter of James* (Pillar NTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2000) 27; L.T. JOHNSON, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York 1995) 85.

<sup>4</sup> F.J. MATERA, *New Testament Ethics. The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville, KY 1996).

<sup>5</sup> R.B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*. Community, Cross, New Creation (San Francisco, CA 1996) 212, 332, 465 (2x), 470, n.6.

<sup>6</sup> A. VERHEY, *The Great Reversal. Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI 1984) 133-136.

sistently ethical document in the New Testament”<sup>7</sup>, it ought to fare better in New Testament ethics texts. Thus, while much of what is said in this paper may seem relatively uncontroversial, there is a need for James to be brought to the table not merely of biblical theology but also of biblical ethics.

James does have a clear theology of God, even if it is not laid out in programmatic (Pauline) fashion. The technique for reading a wisdom text, especially one that has been influenced by apocalyptic writings as James was<sup>8</sup>, is quite different from reading an exposition such as Paul wrote or a history such as the gospels. Once we give James the credit of being a wisdom text where short elliptical sayings actually bear as much — if not more — weight than longer expository sentences<sup>9</sup>, we can begin to unpack James’ theology from his themes, emphases, and statements. Much of his theology can be witnessed in chapter one, and several of the themes that become more important later in the text are at least alluded to in the first chapter. Hence most of our exploration of the specific *theo*-logy will derive from chapter one. What we will discover is that James sees all of Christian life as originating from and through God’s grace. His confidence in God as the divinely generous giver of everything we need undergirds all of his ethical imperatives. Just as with Abraham in Genesis or Israel in Deuteronomy, being chosen by God for covenant places requirements upon one’s life for obedience and holiness. These requirements are laid out in 1,26-27 as three intertwined areas of ethics: speech, moral purity, and social justice. These are not optional, according to the author of the epistle. Those who have been reborn by the word of truth, a word implanted by God’s grace, must live according to that word. Using two of James’s warnings against self-deception, this paper will first pursue James’s theology of God before turning to our mandated ethical response.

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<sup>7</sup> LAWS, *James*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> James is primarily a wisdom text and uses eschatology as motivation for how one should act in the present. J.E. BOTHA, “Simple Salvation, but Not of Straw ... Jacobean Soteriology”, *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. VAN DER WATT) (Leiden 2005) 397, concurs: “It must be made clear that for James eschatology is not the focus. The fact that the day of the Lord is near serves as a motivation to be even more observant of the correct behaviour in order to be found perfect when the *parousia* takes place”.

<sup>9</sup> B. WITHERINGTON, III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL 2007) 391, emphasizes “Sapiential rhetoric is often compressed into pithy or even paradoxical maxims with brief support in order that they be both memorable and memorizable. The implications require a certain unpacking, and the density of the ideas deliberately forces meditation and reflection”.

I. James' *Theo*-logy

James cautions his audience in Jas 1,16: "Do not be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters". This warning reflects back upon the previous pericope's warning against the temptation to blame God for one's own sin, but it also points forward to the reality of God's nature as the source of every good gift. This first of the self-deception warnings stems from James's concern that his audience correctly understand God's character, God's nature as generous and pure, and his role as Judge. Tangentially, James's introduction, combined with his integration of Jesus' teaching, reveals James to have a high view of Jesus as the Christ and divine, and as such his moral teaching is heavily dependent upon Jesus' teaching. That, however, is well covered by others and not the focus of this paper<sup>10</sup>.

James begins the epistle with encouragement in time of trials, concluding: "But if any of you lacks in wisdom, let him ask of the giving God, who gives to all generously and without begrudging, and it will be given to him" (1,5). This last verse gives us a crucial insight into the author's understanding of God. He calls God τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ, using the descriptive participle as the very title of God and making it absolutely clear that this generosity is a primary and repeated trait of God. Also, instead of qualifying an elite group as the recipients of this generosity, James specifies that God gives to everyone (πᾶσιν) generously. The term ἀπλῶς, here translated as "generously" could also mean something more like "single-mindedly"<sup>11</sup>, an idea which makes a great deal of sense in contrast with the "double-minded" person about to appear in 1,7, a person presented as the antithesis of all that God is and wants<sup>12</sup>. God does not second-guess his generosity; he does not waver or doubt. In this regard his character might be called "simple": he gives generously and without reservation, doubt, or hesitation. Depending on how one translates this term, it can support the image of God's purity of will as well as his liberality. Regardless, James makes it clear that God gives to anyone who asks without stinting. As if that were not enough, James then adds that God gives "without reproach". This phrase not only expands the picture of

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<sup>10</sup> R. BAUCKHAM, *James*. Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage (London 1999); W.H. WACHOB, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James* (SNTSMS 106; Cambridge 2000); J.S. KLOPPENBORG, "The Emulation of the Jesus Tradition in the Letter of James", *Reading James with New Eyes*. Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James (eds. R.L. Webb – J.S. Kloppenborg) (London 2007) 121-150.

<sup>11</sup> Moo, *James*, 59.

<sup>12</sup> It (ἀπλῶς) could also mean "sincerely, without hesitation". Cf. P.H. DAVIDS, *The Epistle of James* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1982) 72-73.



God's sheer munificence but also unlocks the idea that God does not expect his people to have wisdom except as a gift from him. God does not condemn the petitioner for their lack of wisdom; instead he *generously gives* the very thing that they need in order to become mature and complete (1,4).

The warning to the doubter that follows in 1,6-8 makes clear how important this aspect of God's character is. To hesitate when requesting what God wants one to have shows either doubt in his character as generous or vacillation regarding the value of wisdom, and this does not please God. The διακρινόμενος stands in direct opposition to God's nature as ἀπλῶς, failing to recognize the basic generosity of God's nature. While God seeks to give to his people everything that they need to please him, those who doubt, like those who are friends with the world (4,4), reveal their uncertainty regarding whether they want to please God, and thus cut themselves off from the help he willingly gives.

Having clearly specified God's generous nature here, and having also issued a warning to those who doubt God's unstinting generosity, the warning against deception in 1,16 makes even greater sense, because it is followed with yet another expression of God's munificence. As with the warning against doubt in 1,6, v. 16 implies the soteriological significance of this deception. Failure to understand God's nature as it is revealed in vv. 17 and 18 can lead to a complete failure to receive his gifts, of which salvation is paramount.

James 1,17-18 may be the most triumphant statement in James of God's role in redeeming his people. It begins with a reiteration of the lesson we learned in 1,5 of God's generosity. The author uses a redundant statement to emphasize this: "every good gift and every perfect giving comes down from above, from the father of lights"<sup>13</sup>. In contrast to the desire, sin, and death that bog down the previous verses, we now find that God is the source of every good thing that comes into our lives. As with the double-minded doubters in 1,6-8, James does not want his audience to be confused about what does and does not come from God. God is the source of manifold good, not evil, as James makes perfectly clear with his reiteration of πᾶς: πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον, "every good giving and every perfect gift". James emphasizes both in the completeness of God's giving with the double use of πᾶς and highlights the gift nature by the synonyms δόσις and δῶρημα. This is not the same as the reward of endurance in 1,12 (the "crown of life") but the sum total of

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<sup>13</sup> See D.J. VERSEPUT, "James 1:17 and the Jewish Morning Prayers", *NT* 39 (1997) 177-191, for a plausible background for this description of God as the "Father of lights" within Jewish prayers said each morning to thank God for his faithfulness in bringing the new day and his mercy evidenced thereby.

every good aspect of life that cannot be earned, such as wisdom (1,5) and new birth (1,18). We can be assured that he will not change in regards to this because “in him there is no variation or shadow of turning”. Unlike the planets that turn and shade and change, in God is only consistency<sup>14</sup>. He is supreme over all that changes in the universe while remaining steadfast himself. As Garland describes it, “God’s goodness ... is not as periodic as the full moon or the morning sunrise. It does not fade into the west”<sup>15</sup>. With the bold statement of 1,17 James again affirms God’s unchanging nature as the generous giver of all that is good, and also demonstrates the singleness, the purity of God’s nature especially as it is revealed in his desire to give the good things his people need.

James uses that confidence, then, as the background for his affirmation of 1,18: “Because he was willing, he gave birth to us by the word of truth in order that we might become a sort of firstfruits of his creation”. This verse states most boldly James’s theology of God’s initiatory work in electing and redeeming his people<sup>16</sup>. As with Abraham and the people of Israel, the process of becoming part of the people of God is initiated and brought into being by God himself. This verse does not state only that God was willing, as if he merely acquiesced to such an event, but that God willed the new creation into being. James brings the causal participle βουληθεῖς right to the beginning of the sentence for this emphasis. It is as if to say that God’s willingness is the only reason James’s addressees had for their communion with God. Subsequently, the idea that he “gave birth” to these people indicates a new nature: they are no longer trapped by their fallen natures but have been re-created by the word<sup>17</sup>. His audience, James says, are the “firstfruits” of something new that God is doing,

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<sup>14</sup> JOHNSON, *James*, 204, argues that “James’ declaration in 1:17 is rightly perceived as one of the noblest *theologoumena* in the NT. Patristic writers recognized its extraordinarily rich and foundational quality ... [and it was] a favored text through the entire Eastern tradition”.

<sup>15</sup> D.E. GARLAND, “Severe Trials, Good Gifts, and Pure Religion: James 1”, *RevExp* 83 (1986) 392.

<sup>16</sup> While the vast majority of scholars views this as a reference to redemption and new birth, L.E. ELLIOTT-BINNS, “James i.18: Creation or Redemption?”, *NTS* 3 (1956) 148-161, views this as a reference “to the original creation of which man was the crown and the promise; [James] knows nothing of any ‘new’ creation or rebirth” (156). M. JACKSON-MCCABE, *Logos & Law in the Letter of James*. The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, & the Law of Freedom (Leiden 2001) agrees, pairing the creation interpretation with the Stoic idea of innate reason.

<sup>17</sup> James’s use of “a kind/sort of” (τινα) may well speak to the “already/not yet” nature of this new birth. The believers have been reborn, but they still apparently struggle with obedience.

brought into this by the very creative word of God. The flow of the text clearly links the *logos* with the law in 1,22-25 and declares it something not only given and implanted (1,18.21) but also something that needs receiving and obeying (1,21-22)<sup>18</sup>.

Because God is the one who willingly chose to redeem his people, he also is the only one with the right to judge. James makes this very clear throughout the epistle. God is described as the “One Lawgiver and One Judge” in 4,12, the only one with the right to judge people’s actions. There he places the εἷς into the preliminary emphatic position, focusing the attention upon this singularity: God is not only one, i.e., undivided and indivisible in his role as Lawgiver and Judge, but more importantly he is the only one who stands in those roles<sup>19</sup>. This role as Judge is the only characteristic of God that people are warned against imitating. Just as one cannot replicate the Lawgiving, one logically also cannot replicate the Judging, since no one has the power “to save and destroy”<sup>20</sup>.

Chapter 2 makes quite clear that people instinctively fail to judge along God’s standards, for God has chosen (ἐξελέξατο)<sup>21</sup> the “poor in the eyes of the world”<sup>22</sup>, a rather poignant reminder to the very people whom God chose according to 1,18. The audience, however, prefers the wealthy and the beautiful, thereby proving themselves “judges with evil thoughts”. Ultimately, God judges with what might be a surprising amount of grace, as is proved in 2,12-13. There the audience is told first to

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<sup>18</sup> James sees several purposes for the λόγος: by it the people were (re) born (1,18), it was implanted in them in this rebirth process but they still need to somehow “receive” it (1,21), and ultimately it then requires active obedience (1,22-24). Without obedience, the receiving is questioned and the implanting denied, thus calling into question the very rebirth process itself. Likewise, within the hearing/obeying pericope of 1,22-25, James makes a smooth transition from λόγος to “law” (νόμος), which then carries the discussion onward into chapter 2.

<sup>19</sup> Moo, *James*, 199, calls this “the unique right of God himself”.

<sup>20</sup> This warning may have had initial foreshadowing in 1:19 when James warns his audience to be “slow to anger, for your anger does not produce the righteousness of God”. Presumably the audience fails to become angry about the correct things, but instead works out their own selfishness and greed when they are angry. Gossip, slander, and complaints against one another are all problems throughout the epistle and give further evidence of a judgmental attitude revealed through speech.

<sup>21</sup> BADG, 305, notes ἐκλέγομαι may have a reflexive note to it: “to pick out someone or someth., choose (for oneself)” and “to make a choice in accordance with significant preference, select someone/someth. for oneself”.

<sup>22</sup> The translation offered here for τῷ κόσμῳ views it as an ethical dative. See the discussion of the options in BLOMBERG – KAMELL, *James*, 112-113.

“speak and to act as those about to be judged by the law of freedom”. This law is the same word that was implanted in 1,18, to which each is to submit in obedience in 1,22. It is the incarnation of God’s grace given to his firstfruits, but it will also be the standard by which they are judged—both for words and for deeds<sup>23</sup>. James warns, “For judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy”. This is the negative of Jesus’ beatitude of Matt 5,7, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy”<sup>24</sup>. Those who fail to act according to the nature of the word and law, whose very character is mercy, will be judged for their failure. But in a triumphant conclusion, James rejoices that “mercy triumphs over judgment”! To those who seek to live by the graciously implanted word and therefore incorporate God’s mercy in their own interactions, to them God’s mercy triumphs at the judgment. Far from being a fearsome threat of judgment, here we are encouraged that our miniscule attempts to respond to God’s initial mercy by acting mercifully are matched and far exceeded by God’s divine mercy in the eschatological judgment.

There are several other areas of theological insight into God’s nature that are raised in chapter one that deserve brief mention, because they shape not only James’s theology but also his view of human responsibility. For instance, related to God’s nature as the generous provider of all that we need, we also see God’s concern for the poor in the great “eschatological reversal” of Jas 1,9-11. Drawing on imagery consistent with the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isa 40,6-7) as well as from the witness of nature, around this passage gives a microcosm of God’s work in righting the wrongs done on earth. Those who are “humble” can rejoice now that God will raise them up (see also Jas 4,6.10). In contrast, those who define themselves by their wealth rather than by their relationship to God can “rejoice” in their imminent downfall<sup>25</sup>. While there are many conflicting interpretations regarding whether the rich can be considered Christian and whether this humiliation is of an eschatological nature, the larger point of

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<sup>23</sup> WACHOB, *Voice of Jesus*, 108, calls 2,12-13 an epicheireme of which the conclusion is the command to “speak and act” based on the parallel but opposing premises of 2,13. While this weakens the importance of 2,13c, it does function to “[remind] the audience that they will be judged by the law which is fulfilled in the love-command”.

<sup>24</sup> DEPPE, *Sayings of Jesus*, 96-99, does not find this a convincing parallel, despite the nearly universal popularity of seeing this beatitude in the background.

<sup>25</sup> See M.J. KAMELL, “The Economics of Humility: The Rich and the Humble in James”, *Economic Dimensions of Early Christianity* (eds. B.W. LONGENECKER – K. LIEBENGOD) (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 157-75, for an examination of these debates as well as a defense of the position taken here of the “rich” as those who identify themselves through their wealth.

the passage is that his people can trust God not only to give his wisdom generously but also to right the wrongs that oppression wreaks in this world. This theme appears most strongly again in James 2,1-7 with the author's frustration at the discrimination his audience is exhibiting, and also in James 5,1-12 with the woe oracle against the wealthy and the encouragement to the oppressed to persevere. In a theological framework in which the Lord works to rectify wrongdoing and oppression, the idea that the Lord is near (5,9) would indeed be a comfort—or a warning.

Another area of James' theology is God's nature as pure, single-minded, and in opposition to all things tainted and duplicitious. We see this first introduced in 1,6-8 with the warning that God will not honor the prayers of the *δίψυχος*. The problem is simply that they stand in opposition to God's nature as the "single-minded" giver. The programmatic statement in 1,27 teaches that God desires worship from those who care for the widows and orphans and "keep themselves unstained by the world". Lockett argues that James understands the *κόσμος* as the entire "world-system", the entirety of a culture's values in which people are embedded and by which they are unconsciously shaped. This cultural system is, however, one of antipathy to the divine value system<sup>26</sup>. In 4,4 James makes his strongest prophetic statement about this when he denounces: "adulteresses! Don't you know that friendship with the world (*κόσμος*) is hatred toward God?" Attraction to this world leads repeatedly to "instability", chaos, and even death. In contrast, the wisdom of God is described as primarily "pure" in 3,17, and out of this purity the other traits of divine wisdom then flow. Davids contends that the "purity" of 3,17 is a participation in God's own purity of character marked by un-mixed obedience to God's commands and service to God alone without compromise to the culture<sup>27</sup>. The believer ought to strive, then, for both moral purity from the *κόσμος* and for purity of attachment to God and God's ways alone. In this purity each is to endure and hold fast, so that all can win God's approbation.

To summarize, then, James' main theological points are as follows: God is the generous giver (1,5) before whom all are leveled (1,9-11) and who rewards the faithful (1,12). James 1,17-18 provides the theological underpinnings for all that James later commands: God is the Father who gives manifold good gifts to all, but particularly to his own whom he has chosen through his grace to bring into his new creation. He opposes the proud and the double-minded, and he cares for the poor. Throughout the epistle, God is the just Judge of his people who will judge them based on

<sup>26</sup> D. LOCKETT, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* (London 2008) 117.

<sup>27</sup> DAVIDS, *Epistle of James*, 154.

their speech and their deeds (2,12-13; 4,12; 5,9). These warnings of judgment are stern counterparts to the grace of God's giving and choosing, but the warnings are so stern because the audience has already experienced God's grace and continues to do so — but fails, to live accordingly.

## II. Responsibility

The second call to guard against self-deception relates to those who believe that they can receive the redemptive word without obeying it. In 1,22 James warns his audience: "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, who deceive themselves". Here the deception is explicitly self-deception, and it again has soteriological significance as the book will make clear. The crucial information that James emphasizes is that the reception of the "implanted word" from 1,21 occurs through obedience. To pretend that one has received the word but not to obey it serves only to reveal the pretence.

What are those commands of which people are called to be "doers"? They can most clearly be seen in the definition of religion in 1,26-27, which is summarized as three interrelated areas of ethics, each of which has been granted full-length studies elsewhere: speech ethics<sup>28</sup>, social justice<sup>29</sup>, and moral purity<sup>30</sup>. All three are of central importance in the epistle, all three are intimately intertwined, and all three are rooted in the *imitatio Dei*<sup>31</sup>, with the third perhaps driving the others by means of internal transformation by which the character of the person takes on the character of God.

First, in terms of speech ethics, 1,26 warns, "If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their reli-

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<sup>28</sup> See esp. W. BAKER, *Personal Speech-Ethics in the Epistle of James* (WUNT II/68; Tübingen 1995), L.T. JOHNSON, "Taciturnity and True Religion: James 1:26-27", *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God* (ed. Idem.) (Grand Rapids, MI 2004), 155-67; J.L.P. WOLMARANS, "The Tongue Guiding the Body: The Anthropological Presuppositions of James 3:1-12", *Neot* 26 (1992) 523-530.

<sup>29</sup> See esp. E. TAMEZ, *The Scandalous Message of James*. Faith Without Works is Dead (New York 2002); P.U. MAYNARD-REID, *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Eugene, OR 2004); WACHOB, *Voice of Jesus*.

<sup>30</sup> See esp. LOCKETT, *Purity and Worldview*; J.H. ELLIOTT, "The Epistle of James in Rhetorical and Social Scientific Perspective: Holiness-Wholeness and Patterns of Replication", *BTB* 23 (1993) 71-81.

<sup>31</sup> LAWS, *James*, 30, observes: "It is tempting to associate these two similar themes, of the singleness and consistency of God, and the doubleness and inconsistency of man, and to suggest that underlying James's condemnation of the latter and his exhortation to singleness is the idea of ethics as the imitation of God".

gion is worthless". Again we see a warning of self-deception, this time in relation to failure to control one's speech. This self-deception is deadly because their careless speech makes their worship "worthless". In chapter 3 we are told that, in relation to speech, "all of us make many mistakes" and to avoid such mistakes would qualify a person as "perfect". All the same, James spurs his audience towards honest speech that is pure, is single-minded, and does not insult another or blaspheme God. He shows himself bewildered by people who can bless God and curse others, a shameful duplicity of speech that stands in direct contradiction to God's simplicity of character. Speech of this nature reveals a person's failure to be transformed by a godly single-mindedness. Ultimately, a careless tongue is said to be "set on fire by gehenna" and leads to the whole course of a person's life being lit on fire (3,6), echoing the language of the uncontrollable desires of chapter 1 that lead to one's physical and spiritual death<sup>32</sup>. To leave one's speech unchecked leads to self-deception and destruction. Ultimately, an uncontrolled tongue cannot coexist in the divine covenant because it so utterly opposes the ways of God.

In terms of social ethics, immediately after describing the failed worship of those who also fail to control their speech, James gives a two-pronged definition of pure worship that begins: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress" (1,27a). The one who visits the distressed, helping them in their difficulty, whether by bringing food or by working to change the larger social structures that leave them "in distress"<sup>33</sup>, gives worship that pleases God<sup>34</sup>. This is the active mercy that mirrors God's heart. James 2,14-26, the famous "faith and works" passage, functions to explain fur-

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<sup>32</sup> See R. BAUCKHAM, *The Fate of the Dead*. Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses (Leiden 1998) 119-131, who argues in his essay on Jas 3,6 that "[the tongue] is itself set on fire by hell" refers not to the inspiration of this evil speech but the final *punishment* for it, making the parallel to 1,13-15 even stronger.

<sup>33</sup> WALL, *Community of the Wise*, 101, warns that "even conventional social wisdom instructs that a group is as viable as its weakest member (cf. Matt. 18:6-14; Acts 6:1-10). For this reason, the biblical Torah is especially concerned that the least and last members of the community are not abused but cared for (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 24:17-21; cf. Ps. 146:9; Isa. 1:17; et al.)". By acting thus, one "anticipates the inevitable reversal".

<sup>34</sup> See S.J. FRIESEN, "Injustice or God's Will: Explanations of Poverty in Proto-Christian Communities", *A People's History of Christianity*. Christian Origins (ed. R.A. HORSELY) (Minneapolis, MN 2005) 244, who sees James as presenting "a relatively simple explanation for economic inequality. Jacob [*sic*] blamed the local elites for economic injustice but also criticizes the general population for complicity" in a system driven by wealth alone.

ther the dichotomy seen in 1,22-25: without obedience there is only self-deception. Each person is called to be a “doer of the word,” the very word given by God’s redemptive grace in 1,17. The problem is simple: in 1,5, God is described as the one who “gives to everyone generously and without begrudging”, and yet in 2,15 the so-called believer responds to the impoverished fellow believer with the words of a hollow blessing: “Go, be warm and well fed”<sup>35</sup>. James uses this example to shock his audience with the emptiness of mere words, but it also fits within his philosophy that those who have been reborn by God ought to act as he acts. Laws, who argues that this is an example of the “reverential periphrasis”, notes the piety in this expression, for it expresses a hope not only that the needs will be cared for but moreover that God will protect the person<sup>36</sup>. The wealthier members of the congregation have not comprehended the implications of God’s generosity, and this figure’s very speech condemns his own unwillingness to be the means of God’s help to the poor. In contrast, the examples of Abraham and Rahab, who put their very lives and futures on the line in response to their faith, show us the path to justification. By having one’s priorities mirror God’s and acting on them, one pleases God (2,13).

This can be seen again as people willingly partake in the overturning of this world’s system. Obviously the statement of 1,9-11 that the poor should “rejoice” in their coming elevation and the rich should “rejoice” in their humiliation shows an awareness that status in this present age means very little in an eschatological sense<sup>37</sup>. But in 2,1-9 the audience is enjoined not to take part in judging as the world judges (see 1 Sam 16 and the story of Samuel and David there) but engage what it means for God to have chosen “the poor in the eyes of the world”. Clearly, “the eyes of the κόσμος” should not be the lense through which the believer views the world! The eyes of the world are squint, leaving the community in dire need of divine contact lenses by which they can finally judge between the

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<sup>35</sup> These verbs could be either middle (NIV; MARTIN, *James*, 85) or passive voice (NASB; LAWS, *James*, 121 ). MOO, *James*, 125, concludes that either way “the point is the same: confronted with a need among his own brothers and sisters, this ‘believer’ does nothing but express his good wishes”.

<sup>36</sup> LAWS, *James*, 121.

<sup>37</sup> See KAMELL, “Economics of Humility”, 157-75, for a discussion regarding the use of humility/humiliation language in James. See H.H.D. WILLIAMS, III, “Of Rags and Riches: The Benefits of Hearing Jeremiah 9:23-24 Within James 1:9-11”, *TynB* 53 (2002) 282, who concludes that this is a “heroic boast of believers” based on the background of Jer. 9,23-24, making this another example of seeing the world through God’s eyes rather than following a human priority on wealth.



rich (but proud) and the poor (but humble) correctly. The business people in 4,13-17 and the landowners in 5,1-6 show us models of people who, to varying degrees, have not yet had their vision transformed. Both, however, are shown to have tendencies to pride that could, left unchecked, lead to their destruction by God. Those who practice active endurance, however, will see “the coming of the Lord” (5,7-8). Identifying with the humble, acknowledging one’s own limitations, and consciously awaiting God’s justice are all ways to partake in God’s promised reversal. The reversal will come when the Judge comes; so from a pragmatic perspective if nothing else it is wise to follow James’ advice to “humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (4,10).

There is one more entity to the “pure religion” of 1,27, and that is the injunction “to keep oneself unstained by the world” (1,27b). This moral purity is not an isolationist policy, an idea that has been floated several times whereby one avoids all contact with “others” in case “they” taint one<sup>38</sup>. Far from being isolationist, which clearly does not fit the context of being out helping the poor and oppressed, this moral purity continues the idea of having the lenses one sees through be changed. Where being stained by the κόσμος is to accept the values and priorities of the world, being “unstained” (ἄσπιλος) is to be shaped by God’s values of generosity and care for the helpless. The κόσμος is the entire worldview that stands in opposition to God, one to which people all-too-readily ascribe. It shows itself in preferring the “gold-ringed” wealthy people who come into the congregation. It shows itself in the worldly wisdom of 3,14-15 that battles for position, envies, and sows disorder. It shows itself in the preference for conflict, the pride, and the greedy requests of 4,1-4. All of these indicate a “worldly” worldview — those who have allowed themselves to be “stained by the world”, a state summed up by James’s unique term δίψυχος. These double-minded cannot quite let go of their attachment to the world order, and so prove themselves far from accepting God’s.

Ultimately there are two main passages that call for purity: 1,21 calls the audience to remove all the “moral filth and evil that is so prevalent among them” before they can “receive the implanted word.” James calls his audience to active participation, entering into the process of humbly

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<sup>38</sup> Recently, P. TRUDINGER, “The Epistle of James: Down-to-Earth and Otherworldly?”, *Downside Review* 122 (2004) 61-63, revived this claim. LOCKETT, *Purity and Worldview*, 187-88, notes in contrast that “the composition is not calling for sectarian separation from the surrounding culture, but rather . . . is a complex document demonstrating a degree of cultural accommodation while at the same time calling forth specific socio-cultural boundaries between the reader and the world”.

acknowledging, confessing and removing the areas of compromise that prevent them from single-minded devotion to the redemptive word of God. By participating in the process, they clear the ground for the planting of the word, as in Jesus' parable of the sower and the seeds in Matt 13 (par. Luke 8,5-8; Mark 4,3-9). There, the seeds that fell among entangling commitments were choked out and failed to bear fruit. Only the seeds that fell upon the prepared ground bore the fruit that they were intended to bear. Here, James urges his audience to prepare their hearts so that they can receive the word "which has the power to save [their] souls". For the word to bear its fruit, the moral impurities of a faulty worldview — a preference for wealth, tendencies toward greed, envy, argumentativeness — must be pruned out. This command, remember, comes after the triumphant pronouncement of God's willingness to redeem by his word. This is a call to respond, to participate, and to accept the work that God is doing. Likewise in Jas 4,4-10, after a harsh reprimand and labeling his audience adulteresses for their moral infidelity to God, the author calls them to "repent," "wash," and "purify" themselves in strongly ritualistic and covenantal language. Much as in Hosea and the other prophets, the audience members have scattered their loves abroad and have garnered this violent condemnation by James. He calls them to repent of their love affair with the κόσμος and to seek the purity that God wants for his people: purity in speech, deed, and worldview.

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These three areas of ethics, namely speech, social, and moral, all emanate from God's own character and are required behavior of those who claim to have been reborn by his word. God is shown in the text to be wholly consistent, and his singleness of nature means that he cannot endure duplicitous speech. Likewise, as the one who will execute justice against the oppressors on behalf of those suffering, those in the church must care for the poor and helpless of society. And finally, because of the purity in goodness that is a central aspect of God's nature, God's people are called to moral purity in their thoughts, choices, and relationships. James 1,4 presents the *telos* of the Christian life as becoming τέλειτοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, living representatives of the very character of God.

James gives his audience a two-fold warning against self-deception: they ought to know who God is in all his generosity and purity and be transformed in obedience to the word by which he rebirthed them. The ethics of James are not some sort of "works-righteousness" but a triumphant acceptance of God's grace. God has given birth to his "firstfruits" by the "word of truth", but this is the same "word" which must be

“received” and of which people must become “doers” lest it be self-deception and a cause for judgment. Because God is generous, his people ought to be generous. Because God opposes the proud, his people ought to strive for humility. Because God is pure and single-minded, his followers ought to shun the things of the world that taint and lead them to double-mindedness. Because God speaks grace and truth to his people, his disciples’ speech ought to be gracious and considerate, not judgmental. Because God loves the poor, his people ought to love the poor. These are not options for how one might live; James roots his imperatives in the very character and nature of the God who in his grace initiated a covenant relationship. This depth of theological grounding to James’s moral vision ought to make this epistle central to discussions of New Testament ethics.

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#### SUMMARY

The Epistle of James has been considered one of the most practical pieces of writings in the New Testament, and yet it has been consistently neglected in the writings of both New Testament scholars and ethicists. This neglect most likely derives from a failure to understand the theological underpinning for the imperatives in James, perceived as ethics in a vacuum. Understood correctly, the three areas of James’ ethical concern: speech ethics, social justice, and moral purity, stem from God’s own character and his redemption of his chosen people, making his ethics among the most theologically developed of the New Testament.

# RECENSIONES

## Vetus Testamentum

Tryggve N.D. METTINGER, *The Eden Narrative. A Literary and Religio-historical Study on Genesis 2-3*. Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 2007. xvii – 159 p. 16 × 23,5. Hardcover: \$19.50

“Que peut-il encore pousser dans le jardin d’Éden?”. C’est ainsi que débute la recension que H.N. Wallace consacre au livre qui nous occupe (RBL 12 [2008], sur le site internet de la *Society of Biblical Literature*). Dans le même sens, nous pourrions demander qui est encore intéressé à se promener dans ce jardin après avoir pris connaissance de l’immense bibliographie sur le sujet. Notre auteur réussit pourtant le tour de force de nous faire franchir la porte que gardent désormais des chérubins armés de glaive de feu. Les raisons principales sont deux. Tout d’abord, et il faut le souligner, il écrit avec une clarté que l’on souhaiterait rencontrer plus fréquemment dans la littérature exégétique. L’A. explique à chaque étape la méthode qu’il emploie et il résume les résultats obtenus à la fin de chaque chapitre. En second lieu, il pose immédiatement des questions essentielles et il y répond pas à pas, dans un exposé linéaire, en exposant ses arguments et sans se laisser séduire par les sirènes qui attirent les exégètes vers les gouffres de l’érudition ou les tourbillons des hypothèses fragiles.

L’ouvrage comprend sept parties. Dans l’introduction (1), l’A. explique le but de son enquête. Les deux questions essentielles auxquelles il cherchera de répondre sont les suivantes: (1) Quel est le thème central de Gn 2,4-3,24? (2) Est-ce que l’auteur – ou le “poète” comme l’appelle T.M. – a utilisé des matériaux pré-littéraires plus anciens pour composer son récit? Si c’est le cas, quelle transformation a-t-il fait subir à ces matériaux?

À propos du thème du récit, il faut constater qu’il n’existe guère de consensus même si les exégètes reprennent souvent les mêmes termes: immortalité, sagesse, péché, vie, mort, obéissance, *hybris* ... Il vaut donc la peine, selon notre A. de remettre l’ouvrage sur le métier. L’enquête part d’une constatation intéressante: le récit parle de deux arbres, l’arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal et l’arbre de la vie. Mais, cette juxtaposition n’est pas sans problèmes. Par exemple, quel est “l’arbre au milieu du jardin” (2,9; 3,3)? Depuis K. BUDDE, *Die biblische Urgeschichte*. Gen. 1-12,5 (Gießen 1883) 51-58, beaucoup d’exégètes abattent

l'un des deux arbres. Un seul serait original, en général l'arbre de la connaissance, et l'autre, l'arbre de la vie, serait secondaire. Avec une pointe d'humour, T.M. constate que depuis lors les exégètes ont continué à déboiser le jardin d'Éden en envoyant l'arbre de la vie dans le broyeur de la critique des sources (xi). Il y a peu d'exceptions (entre autres P. Humbert, J. Barr, K. Schmid, T. Stordalen). Il est donc inévitable de poser la question de l'unité du texte. L'A. termine en affirmant que Gn 2-3 est un texte postexilique qui date de l'époque perse. Sur ce point, il s'appuie sur quelques travaux antérieurs sans approfondir lui-même la question (11).

Dans l'A. opte délibérément pour une analyse narrative et, par conséquent, pour une première lecture synchronique. Dans ces pages - et non seulement dans ces pages - T.M. dialogue souvent avec son collègue norvégien T. Stordalen qui a écrit une petite somme de plus de 500 pages sur le sujet: *Echoes of Eden. Gen 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 25; Leuven 2000).

L'analyse narrative emploie des catégories devenues désormais familières: temps et lieu, scènes et trame/intrigue (*plot*), personnages, point de vue, omniscience ... Relevons seulement quelques conclusions plus importantes. Selon T.M. Gn 2-3 ne comporte pas d'exposition. Cela me paraît difficile à admettre. Un récit comporte toujours quelques éléments d'exposition, soit implicites, soit explicites. Le lecteur doit être informé sur les circonstances de lieu et de temps, et sur les principaux personnages du récit. Gn 2 commence d'ailleurs par expliquer que nous sommes à une époque particulière "avant que" n'existe la végétation, la pluie et l'être humain (2,5). Cette information est typique d'une "exposition". Ceci nous amène à une seconde observation. Puisque la situation initiale est celle d'un désert complet, le narrateur est obligé de créer un cadre et des personnages avant de pouvoir lancer son récit. C'est ce qui se passe en Gn 2,5-25. Comme dans d'autres cas, c'est une scène ou une série de courtes scènes qui forment l'exposition. L'action comme telle ne commence en fait qu'avec l'arrivée du serpent (3,1). Avant cela, il n'existe aucune vraie tension dramatique.

Pour T.M. la trame du récit serait celle d'une "épreuve" ou d'un "test". Ceci est d'ailleurs une des principales thèses de ce livre. L'argument principal de l'A. est tiré de la traduction de Gn 2,17 qu'il interprète comme une condition: "for if you eat of it you shall certainly die" (23). Il traduit donc le *b'ôl* de la phrase par "si". Cette traduction est possible ici comme ailleurs (Ex 10,28; Nb 30,6,9,13; 1 R 2,37,42; Rt 4,5). Mais il reste une difficulté. Il est vrai que dans nos langues, "si" peut devenir un équivalent de "lorsque" et une proposition conditionnelle peut équivaloir à une proposition temporelle. Il n'en reste pas moins vrai que, dans tous

les cas étudiés, la traduction normale de *b'êyôm* par “quand” est tout aussi satisfaisante. De plus, et cette objection me paraît plus sérieuse, dans les textes qui parlent explicitement d'épreuve, la construction est différente (cf. Ex 16,4; Dt 8,2; Jg 2,22). Le verbe *ns'* (“mettre à l'épreuve”) est suivi d'une question indirecte: “est-ce que... ou non” – *hă* [...] *'im lô'*. T.M. note l'absence du verbe *ns'*, mais cela ne lui semble pas déterminant (23). L'arbre de la connaissance est l'objet de l'épreuve et l'arbre de la vie (ou l'accès à l'arbre de la vie) en est l'enjeu.

Les deux arbres sont donc indispensables au récit. Sur ce point, T.M. s'appuie sur l'analyse approfondie de Gn 2,9 faite par A. MICHEL, *Theologie aus der Peripherie. Die gespaltene Koordination im Biblischen Hebräisch* (BZAW 257; Berlin – New York 1997) 1-22. Selon cet auteur, nous avons dans ce verset une construction hébraïque typique: une chaîne coordonnée – avec deux éléments dans notre cas – et un complément qui qualifie *tous* les membres de cette chaîne coordonnée. En hébreu, ce complément est placé après le *premier* membre de la chaîne coordonnée. Il semble donc interrompre cette chaîne, mais il n'en est rien. La traduction la plus correcte de Gn 2,9 devrait donc être: “Dieu fit pousser du sol toutes sortes d'arbres agréables à voir et [donnant des fruits] bons à manger et, au milieu du jardin, l'arbre de la vie et l'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal”. Les deux arbres se trouvent donc côte à côte au milieu du jardin.

Mais revenons au thème de l'épreuve. Pour T.M., le renversement de situation (*peripeteia*) a lieu lorsque la femme et l'homme mangent du fruit (3,6). Le test se termine par un échec et le reste du récit en décrit les conséquences. Il me semble plutôt que Gn 3,6 décrit l'action décisive et que 3,7 contient l'*anagnorisis* du récit, le passage de l'ignorance à la connaissance (“leurs yeux s'ouvrirent et ils surent [*wayyēd'û*]”). L'homme et la femme savent, mais ils viennent de perdre l'immortalité. Le changement de connaissance (*anagnorisis*) coïncide avec le changement de situation (*peripeteia*) symbolisé par le geste de se couvrir de feuilles de figuier (cf. 3,7 et 2,25).

Toujours dans l'analyse narrative, l'A. note que les personnages ne sont pas au courant de toutes les informations que le narrateur communique au lecteur. Le premier couple ne connaît qu'un seul arbre, celui de la connaissance, mais il ne connaît pas l'arbre de la vie. Ajoutons que le récit ne nous dit pas comment le serpent et la femme ont appris l'existence de l'ordre que Dieu donne à l'homme défend de consommer du fruit de l'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal (2,19).

Le troisième chapitre répond directement à la question du thème du récit qui est, selon notre A., celui du test ou épreuve dont l'enjeu est l'immortalité. Adam et Ève sont mis devant un choix: obéir ou désobéir, tout comme le seront plus tard Israël, Abraham ou Job. Nous retrouvons

ici certains éléments reconnaissables de la théologie deutéronomiste. La chose avait été suggérée en son temps par A.M. DUBARLE, *Les sages d'Israël* (LD 1; Paris 1946) 7-24 et L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, "Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gen 2-3", *Bib* 43 (1962) 295-316 = "Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2-3", *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. J.L. CRENSHAW) (New York 1976) 468-480. Ce dernier point fait problème, toutefois, puisque les textes deutéronomistes qui parlent de l'épreuve (Ex 16,4; Dt 8,2; Jg 2,22; cf. Ex 15,25-26) emploient des tournures assez différentes.

Le récit contient, à notre avis, plusieurs éléments d'une action juridique. La situation de départ est décrite en Gn 2,5-25: le "paradis" et les conditions de vie dans le paradis, entre autres le commandement de 2,16. Nous avons ensuite le délit (3,1-7), l'enquête (3,8-13), la sentence divine (3,14-19) et la conclusion qui décrit la situation subséquente à la sentence (3,20-24). Nous aurions donc un récit de "crime et châtement", mais situé aux origines de l'humanité et qui explique la condition présente de l'humanité. Le récit relève aussi de la théodicée. En peu de mots, la condition humaine est pénible, non parce que le monde a été mal fait (par Dieu), mais en raison d'une faute commise par les ancêtres du genre humain. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'une fatalité; il s'agit des conséquences d'un acte conscient et délibéré.

Dans le quatrième chapitre, c'est la question du genre littéraire de Gn 2-3 qui fait l'objet d'une analyse serrée. Pour l'A. le texte fait partie des "mythes", fidèle en cela à une longue et solide tradition scandinave. Il existe bien des méthodes d'analyser les mythes et l'A. choisit la méthode fonctionnaliste (B. Malinowski, J. Campbell). Pour ce dernier, un mythe a pour but de fonder l'autorité d'un ordre moral "as a construct beyond criticism and human emendation" (texte cité p. 70). Dans ce même cadre, T.M. note la possible présence, dans Gn 2-3, d'éléments provenant des récits mythologiques du combat primordial où le serpent pouvait représenter l'adversaire de la divinité. Il parle moins du serpent, symbole de fertilité.

Le cinquième chapitre passe à la seconde question de l'A., celle qui regarde l'origine des motifs qui sont entrés dans la composition de Gn 2-3. Le texte qui retient son attention est bien sûr Éz 28. Il y retrouve des éléments anciens réinterprétés par l'auteur de notre récit. Le mythe original parlait d'un premier homme, d'un jardin d'Éden, d'un péché, de l'expulsion du jardin, de sagesse et d'immortalité. L'auteur de Gn 2-3 y ajoute le commandement divin et centre donc le mythe sur l'obéissance ou la désobéissance du premier couple, thème deutéronomiste. Certains pourront s'étonner que T.M. accorde autant d'importance à Éz 28 et à la littérature deutéronomiste, mais ne cite guère Gn 1. Si Gn 2-3 date l'époque perse, Gn 1 devait être connu.

Avec le sixième chapitre nous explorons le monde des parallèles mésopotamiens. L'A. prend en considération le mythe d'Adapa et l'épopée de Gilgamesh qui tous deux parlent à la fois de sagesse et d'immortalité. Il est possible que ces poèmes mésopotamiens aient été connus à l'époque postexilique en Israël.

Le septième chapitre offre une synthèse des résultats obtenus. L'ouvrage est complété par une bibliographie (136-155), un index des auteurs (156-159), un index des citations bibliques (160-162), un index des citations reprises à des sources anciennes (163-164) et un index thématique qui reprend surtout les termes littéraires (165).

Répetons en finale que le livre est passionnant à lire. Les quelques points que je me suis permis de discuter ne font que confirmer la qualité de cette contribution. Notons enfin que vient de paraître sur le même sujet vient un volume collectif: K. SCHMID – Ch. RIEDWEG (eds.), *Beyond Eden. The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2-3) and Its Reception History* (FAT II 34; Tübingen 2008).

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Michael ROHDE, *Der Knecht Ijob im Gespräch mit Mose. Eine traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Ijobbuch* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 26). Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007. 255 p. 16 × 23,5

M. Rohde hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, der Frage nachzugehen, was die Rede von Ijob als Knecht impliziert. Im Vordergrund der Untersuchung stehen deshalb die so genannten Himmelszenen (1,6-12; 2,1-7) und das göttliche Schlussurteil (42,7-9), in denen Ijob insgesamt sechs Mal aus der Perspektive Gottes als "mein Knecht bezeichnet wird".

Die Analyse erfolgt auf drei Ebenen.

Auf synchroner Ebene untersucht M. Rohde zunächst Motive und Traditionen, die zu Erhellung und Profilierung der Ijobfigur in den besagten Textabschnitten beitragen (40-101). Dabei stellt er fest, dass die unmittelbare Nähe und personale Bindung Ijobs gegenüber Gott vorausgesetzt wird. Dies macht M. Rohde nicht nur an der Titulatur "mein Knecht" sondern auch an der Angesichtsmetaphorik fest. Gerade am Gebrauch der Angesichtsmetaphorik werde aber die paradoxe Stellung Ijobs vor Gott deutlich. Einerseits setze sie voraus, dass Ijob Mitglied des Thronrats Gottes ist und dadurch mental in die göttliche Sphäre gerückt wird, andererseits drücke sie im Kontext einer möglichen Verfluchung



(“... ob er dir nicht in dein Angesicht fluchen wird”) die größtmögliche Entfernung zu Gott aus. Diese Spannung werde erst im göttlichen Schlussurteil (42,7-10), wo Ijob gleich viermal aus der Perspektive Gottes als “mein Knecht“ bezeichnet wird, und in der Gottesschau Ijobs (42,5-6) aufgelöst. Denn entgegen der Vermutung des Satans flucht Ijob nicht dem Angesicht JHWH, sondern Gott erweist ihm gegenüber seine Gunst, indem er selbst das Angesicht Ijobs erhebt (42,9). In besonderer Weise steche die Antwort Ijobs auf die zweite Gottesrede in 42,2-6 hervor, die dem göttlichen Schlussurteil in 42,7-9 vorangeht. Das Sehen in 42,5 stelle die höchste Stufe der Gottesbegegnung dar und sei dem Hören damit übergeordnet.

In einem zweiten Schritt versucht M. Rohde auf der diachronen Ebene eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Verortung jener synchron untersuchten Textpassagen (102-176). Dabei geht er auch auf thematische Fragestellungen, insbesondere auf das Sündenverständnis der Rahmenerzählung ein. M. Rohde kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass Ijob 42,7-10 und 1,6-12,22; 2,1-10 zu einer gemeinsamen Bearbeitungsschicht gehören. Die Intention der Bearbeitung sei es, Ijob als Frommen zu charakterisieren, der trotz aller Schicksalsschläge und gegen die Erwartung Satans nicht sündigt. Diese Redaktion habe das Anliegen gehabt, Ijob als Knecht zu qualifizieren. Indem Ijob in den Thronsaal Gottes hineingestellt werde, gehöre er zum engsten Kreis der Vertrauten Gottes. Einer weiteren Bearbeitung schreibt M. Rohde Ijob 42,2-6 zu. Intention dieser Bearbeitung sei es gewesen, Ijob als eine Figur darzustellen, die Gott nicht nur unmittelbar hört, sondern ihn auch sieht.

In einem letzten Schritt versucht M. Rohde auf intertextueller Ebene aufzuzeigen, inwiefern Motive der Mosetradition auf die Ijobfigur Einfluss genommen haben (177-220). Als Vergleichspunkt sieht M. Rohde insbesondere die Textstellen Dtn 34,10-12; 18,15-18 und Num 11,24b-29 heran. Motivparallelen lassen sich vor allem in den genannten Bearbeitungsschichten des Ijobbuches ausfindig machen. Dabei behauptet M. Rohde keine literarische Abhängigkeit, sondern eine theologisch hintergründige Kommentierung von Teilen der Moseüberlieferung. Eine nicht zu übersehende Parallele ist zum Beispiel die Bezeichnung beider als “mein Knecht”. Den Vergleich bestimmen weiterhin die Vorstellungen von Fürbitte und Opfer, die Angesichtsmetaphorik und das Sehen Gottes mit den Augen. Darüber hinaus existieren Entsprechungen in der Funktion der jeweiligen Figuren mit ihren priesterlichen und prophetischen Aspekten. Insbesondere die beispiellose Stellung beider Gestalten vor Gott gelte es zu bedenken. Die Überlegenheit des Mose gegenüber den Propheten entspricht dabei strukturell der Überlegenheit Ijobs gegenüber seinen Freunden. Eine weitere Parallele sei, dass die Charakterisierungen beider aus dem Rollenmuster der königlichen Audienz schöpfen.

Trotz aller Parallelen existieren aber auch einige Unterschiede. In Ijob 42,5 wird nämlich anders als in der Mosetradition das Hören gegenüber dem Sehen abgewertet. Darin sieht M. Rohde eine kritische Rezeption der Mosetradition. Das Hören sei im weisheitlichen Diskurs kein Ausweg, um die Frage nach dem Grund des Leidens des Gerechten zu beantworten, stattdessen impliziere die Gottesschau ein kultisches Moment.

M. Rohde ist es in dieser Arbeit gelungen, zahlreiche Bezüge zwischen Ijob und Mose herauszuarbeiten, die in der Forschung bisher keine Beachtung fanden. Dabei geht M. Rohde mit größter Genauigkeit vor, indem er nicht nur die Vergleichspunkte benennt, sondern auch sehr dezidiert auf Unterschiede hinweist, was zu einer Profilierung beider Figuren führt. So stellt er beispielsweise nicht nur fest, dass Mose und Ijob zwar beide als eine Art Priester fungieren – im Fall des Mose jedoch, weil Gott es will, im Fall Ijobs, weil dieser es selbst will. Genau umgekehrt verhält es sich mit der Funktion als Fürsprecher. Mose tritt aus eigenem Selbstverständnis heraus als Fürsprecher für Israel auf, während Ijob von Gott zum Fürsprecher gemacht wird.

Problematisch erscheint, dass M. Rohde die genannten motivlichen Parallelen mit einer redaktionellen Bearbeitung in Verbindung bringt, die aufgrund jener Entsprechungen die Intention gehabt haben soll, das Ijobbild der Grunderzählung in Anlehnung an die Mosetradition umzuformen bzw. zu verändern. Um eine solche These aufstellen zu können, reichen meines Erachtens motivliche Entsprechungen nicht aus; sie müsste durch sprachliche und syntaktische Indizien fundiert werden. Eine methodologische Grundlegung dessen, was der Verfasser unter Intertextualität versteht, wäre deshalb erforderlich gewesen. Zur Diskussion steht nämlich, unter welchen Voraussetzungen Bezüge zwischen zwei Texten als bewusste Setzung eines Autors bzw. einer Autorengruppe bestimmt werden können. Zweifellos können Zitate in vollständiger oder modifizierter Form als bewusst gesetzte Textsignale eines Autors kategorisiert werden, mit denen die Intention verbunden ist, zwei Texte miteinander ins Gespräch zu bringen. Im Fall stilistischer oder motivlicher Anspielungen ist eine Entscheidung schwierig. Die Verweise sind meist nicht deutlich genug, um die bewusste Setzung durch einen Autor behaupten zu können – zu den Formen von Intertextualität in der Bibel siehe S. Hüenthal, *Transformation und Aktualisierung* (SBB 57; Stuttgart 2006) 48-58. Außer Diskussion steht, dass die Untersuchung solcher Anspielungen einen nicht zu unterschätzenden Wert für die synchrone Textauslegung hat, doch ist deren Nutzen hinsichtlich diachroner Problemlösungen in Frage zu stellen. M. Rohde betont zwar, keine literarische Abhängigkeit behaupten zu wollen, und stuft die In-Bezugsetzung als hintergründige theologische Kommentierung ein, dennoch führt er diese eben auf die Intention einer Redaktionsbearbeitung zurück.

Sehr hilfreich und originell ist die Bestimmung der Ijobfigur als Rolle in einem sozial- bzw. religionspsychologischen Sinn, die es überhaupt erst möglich macht, Ijob mit Mose ins Gespräch zu bringen. Bei dieser Verhältnisbestimmung geht es nicht um den historischen Mose bzw. um den wirklichen Ijob, sondern um die In-Bezugsetzung theologischer Denkgfiguren.

Hinsichtlich der Redaktionskritik erfindet M. Rohde das Rad nicht völlig neu, sondern knüpft an vorhandene Forschungsergebnisse an – allerdings nicht ohne diese kritisch zu reflektieren bzw. gegebenenfalls sogar zu modifizieren, um letztlich einen differenzierten Entwurf einer Redaktionsgeschichte zu bieten (176). So geht M. Rohde beispielsweise mit M. Witte von einer so genannten Niedrigkeitsredaktion aus, die die Abschnitte 4,12-21; 15,11-16; 25,1-6; 40,3-5 umfasst. Gegen M. Witte rechnet M. Rohde Hi 42,2-6 aber nicht zu dieser Redaktion, da er zu recht bemerkt, dass die Antwort Ijobs auf die zweite Gottesrede mit der Formulierung in 42,5 (“Aber nun hat mein Auge dich gesehen”) über die unterstellte Intention hinausweist.

Was die Gottesschau Ijobs betrifft, versucht M. Rohde aufzuzeigen, wie diese jeder Analogie entbehrt. Das Sehen in Hi 42,5 wird nicht einfach als zum Hören komplementäre Qualität wiedergeben, sondern steht für etwas zeitlich und logisch Neues. In zahlreichen apokalyptischen Texten wird das Sehen als endzeitliche Möglichkeit und letzte Steigerung der Gotteserfahrung beschrieben. Das Besondere bei Ijob ist nun, dass diese Erfahrung bereits im Diesseits angesiedelt ist. An der Stelle hätte M. Rohde auf Jes 6,5 aufmerksam machen müssen, wo Jesaja davon spricht, dass seine Augen den König, den Herrn der Heere gesehen haben. Wie in Hi 42,5 sind die Augen bzw. das Auge Subjekt und das Sehen Prädikat, während der Herr bzw. Gott Objekt der Schau ist.

In der Unterordnung des Hörens unter das Sehen sieht M. Rohde das Ende der Weisheit und die Wiederbelebung des Kultes als Bewältigung offener Lebensfragen. Diesen Punkt hätte M. Rohde allerdings genauer ausführen sollen, da nicht deutlich wird, worin denn das Verhältnis von Gottesschau und Kult besteht. Hier stellt sich auch die Frage nach einer zeitgeschichtlichen Verortung der jüngeren Bearbeitungsschichten, die M. Rohde jedoch nicht thematisiert, obwohl sie für die Einordnung und das Verständnis der mutmaßlichen Bearbeitungen hilfreich wäre. M. Rohde hätte beispielsweise die kultische Interpretation von Hi 42,5 in einen historischen Zusammenhang mit der nachexilischen Gemeinde des zweiten Tempels stellen können. Auch mögliche Entsprechungen und Parallelen zu Esra und Nehemia wären eine Reflexion Wert gewesen (zumal Esra in der pharisäisch-rabbinischen Tradition, da er das Gesetz – womöglich eine “Urform“ der Tora – promulierte, als zweiter Mose gilt). Vielleicht wäre dadurch auch der behauptete Zusammenhang

zwischen Kult und Gottesschau klarer geworden. Eine genaue Bestimmung und Charakterisierung kultischer Elemente wäre für eine kultische Interpretation von Hi 42,5 jedenfalls dringlich gewesen.

Die sprachlichen Ausführungen und der Gang der Argumentation sind alles in allem gut nachvollziehbar, allerdings ist es streckenweise schwierig, den roten Faden der Arbeit zu finden. So wird der Leser beispielsweise schon in der Einführung von einem Fragensammelsurium erschlagen (11). Wünschenswert wäre gewesen, wenn M. Rohde im letzten Kapitel, das versucht, den Ertrag der Untersuchung zusammenzufassen, explizit auf seine eigentliche Eingangsfrage, was denn eigentlich die Rede Ijobs als "mein Knecht" impliziere, eingegangen wäre. So wären Anfang und Ende der Arbeit besser miteinander verknüpft worden, was für den erwähnten roten Faden förderlich gewesen wäre. Aus Gründen der Leserfreundlichkeit wäre außerdem eine Ankündigung des Aufbaus der Arbeit bzw. der einzelnen Kapitel mit jeweiliger Begründung hilfreich gewesen.

Insgesamt ist festzuhalten, dass die Arbeit für die Forschung durchaus ertragreich ist. Die In-Bezugsetzung zu Mose führt zu einer aufschlussreichen Interpretation der Ijobfigur. Zahlreiche Aspekte und Charakterisierungen rücken Ijob in ein neues Licht. Auf synchroner Ebene sind die Beobachtungen M. Rohdes deshalb in jedem Fall ein Gewinn.

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Shimon BAR-EFRAT, *Das Erste Buch Samuel*. Ein narratologisch-philologischer Kommentar (Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 176). Stuttgart, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2007. 379 p. 16 × 24. €48 – SFr 83.

Shimon Bar-Efrat's commentary on First Samuel begins with an introduction of about 55 pages, and then the book is broken up into thirty-six separate units of unequal length for the detailed commentary. The units vary in length from as few as five verses (22,1-5) to as many as five chapters (chapters 8-12). The comments begin with an overall treatment of the unit to be discussed, and this is followed by the detailed treatment of selected Hebrew phrases, expressions, or individual words. The commentary was originally written in modern Hebrew for an audience fluent in modern Hebrew, but not as familiar with classical Hebrew. Because of this, the lemmata selected for discussion are primarily those that would present difficulties to speakers of modern Hebrew because of differences

in meaning or grammatical construction between the classical language and modern Hebrew. For readers more at home in the classical language, the choice is not always what one would like to see discussed.

The introduction contains typical material about the name and contents of the book, its structure, its literary character, its style, the main characters, and the text, but it differs from most modern critical commentaries in the detailed attention that it gives to the history of Jewish interpretation of the text. It also has a very nice treatment of the history of the reception of the text, not just in Jewish culture, but in universal culture, including Christian and Islamic, as well as in liturgical poetry, philosophy, literature, art, and music. This reader found this section of the commentary the most fascinating and in many ways the most valuable part of the whole volume. The rabbinic attempts to justify the radically different treatments of Saul and David in the narrative of the books of Samuel was particularly interesting, especially the strained attempts to clear David of adultery with Bathsheba.

In some ways Bar-Efrat's commentary shares the rabbinic apologetic concern to always justify David at the expense of his rivals. Bar-Efrat recognizes that First Samuel is composed of many disparate and sometimes conflicting traditions and that the process of composition was quite complex, but he is uninterested in exploring that process in any detail, and he shows no interest in reflecting on the historical events that may have shaped the process. He makes passing reference to critical scholars who read 1-2 Samuel's positive evaluation of David with a hermeneutics of suspicion, but he curtly dismisses their views without any substantive argument as unfounded. He is satisfied with a literary reading of the final form of the text that shows little or no interest in how it acquired that form, even when the present form is riddled with inconsistencies. Three examples will have to suffice.

The present text of Samuel presents the prophet and priest Samuel as ruling over Israel as judge and contributing to a significant defeat of the Philistines well before the appointment of Saul as king. According to 1 Samuel 7,13-14, the Philistines were subdued under Samuel and did not again enter the territory of Israel all the days of his life. This, however, stands in direct contradiction with the notice that there was a Philistine garrison in Israel's central hill country at Gibeath-elohim (10,5) at the time the prophet Samuel chose Saul to be king. The only way to reconcile these conflicting details is to dismiss the schematic arrangement of Samuel and Saul as secondary and to link Samuel's victory over the Philistines to Saul's early successes against them. The editor of this material does not want to credit Saul with this success — note that the military commander in this battle is not mentioned, only the religious leader — and by attributing it to Samuel before Saul's appearance, he undercuts any

need for the choice of Saul as king, but he accomplishes this at the expense of acute internal contradictions within the narrative.

Similar inconsistencies are found in the narrative in 9,1-10,16 and its continuation in chapter 13. In 9,1-10,16 Saul is presented as a young man, still wet behind the ears, who must follow the advice of a servant. As a result of following that advice, Saul encounters Samuel, who anoints him to be king, gives him three signs that will happen to him to confirm that choice on the way home, and urges him that when this happens, he should do what his hand finds to do. Efrat correctly recognizes that this refers to taking action against the Philistine garrison in Gibeath-elohim, though the present text says nothing of Saul taking any such action. Finally, after this action, Saul is to go down to Gilgal and wait seven days for Samuel. Those seven days are not mentioned again until 13,8, where Saul is suddenly old enough to have a grown son, Jonathan, who is an accomplished warrior, and who, rather than Saul, actually deserved the credit for defeating the Philistine garrison at Geba. It is hard to make sense of the very strange shape of these traditions without assuming that pro-Saul traditions have been intentionally altered to elevate Jonathan, the close friend of David, at Saul's expense. Such examples could be multiplied, but they all point to the fact that the traditions about Samuel and Saul were edited and refracted in the Davidic court after the time of Samuel and Saul. Bar-Efrat's refusal to even consider the implications of David's need to justify his irregular succession to the throne for the reshaping and even mutilation of the earlier traditions about Samuel and Saul is puzzling, particularly since similar editing of the claims and traditions about one's royal predecessor are well attested in the Ancient Near East.

Finally, this concern to justify David and castigate Saul, a concern that Bar-Efrat shares with the biblical author of David's apology, is also found in Bar-Efrat's treatment of David's visit to the sanctuary at Nob (21,2-10) and Saul's subsequent massacre of Ahimelech and the priests of Nob (22,6-23). The account of David's visit to Nob mentions his request for food and for a weapon, but omits any mention of a request for an oracle. Bar-Efrat takes that to mean that there was no request for an oracle, since, if there had been, the author would have mentioned it, but that hardly follows. To mention an oracle here would have made clear that Ahimelech was not as innocent as the author wants to portray him. Ahimelech, who trembled with fear when he saw David coming, could hardly have taken an oracle without confirming his suspicions about David's real reasons for showing up alone, unarmed, and unprovisioned, so the author omits that detail. In the subsequent account, however, Saul accuses Ahimelech of giving David food and a weapon, and of taking an oracle for David (22,13). Bar-Efrat claims that Ahimelech denies the final charge, but his translation of the Hebrew expression *hywm hlyt lš'wl lw*

*b'lhym*, "I have never consulted God for him, and I have therefore also not begun now" (Niemals habe ich für ihn Gott befragt, und ich habe damit auch jetzt nicht angefangen, 299) is idiosyncratic and is based on nothing more than his claim that it was not plausible that David had asked Ahimelech for an oracle. The ancient translations and most modern commentators understand the Hebrew to mean, "Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! (*hlylh ly*)". Ahimelech admits he inquired for David, but he claims that it was a long-standing practice to inquire for David as a loyal commander of Saul's troops. If Bar-Efrat had shown a little more interest in and suspicion about the biases and political point of view of the editors of Samuel, his commentary would have been far more persuasive.

Nonetheless, there is much that one can learn from this commentary. Bar-Efrat's observations on literary style are often helpful, and his continuous reference to the Jewish exegetical tradition is quite valuable. This together with the marvelous treatment of the Jewish exegetical tradition and the history of the reception of Samuel in his introduction makes the volume well worth its price as a reference volume in one's library.

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Jürg HUTZLI, *Die Erzählung von Hanna und Samuel*. Textkritische und literarische Analyse von 1. Samuel 1-2 unter Berücksichtigung des Kontextes (ATANT 89). Zürich, Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2007. 296 p. 16,5 × 24. SFr 64 – €44 – EUA 45,30.

Cet ouvrage expose une version corrigée de la thèse doctorale présentée par l'auteur en 2005 à l'Université de Berne, sous la direction de Walter Dietrich, Emmanuel Tov et Thomas Römer. A l'intérieur du cadre formé par une courte introduction (13-23) et un "appendice" (*Anhang*, 273-296, comportant une liste des abréviations, une abondante bibliographie et une table des principales références bibliques), il comporte cinq parties principales.

La première partie (25-152) couvre à elle seule près de la moitié du volume. Elle propose l'exploration systématique des différences entre les trois témoins principaux du texte: le TM, 4QSam<sup>a</sup> et la LXX. Jamais, jusqu'ici, un tel examen n'avait été entrepris d'une manière exhaustive, et le travail me paraît soigné. L'auteur commence par exposer les caractéristiques saillantes de chaque témoin: particularités orthographiques et corrections théologiques du TM, particularités de traduction de la LXX à

partir de l'hébreu, etc. Après cette introduction, qui rendra service à tous ceux qui veulent étudier d'une manière précise les livres de Samuel, on trouve un commentaire suivi de 1 S 1-2, du point de vue de la critique textuelle. Chaque variante est discutée avec clarté, et les choix proposés me semblent en général bien fondés; seuls, quelques cas paraissent indécidables. Cette première partie s'achève par une synthèse des résultats obtenus. Aucun des témoins ne peut se prévaloir d'avoir toujours conservé le texte "le plus ancien". Le TM a corrigé le texte pour diverses raisons théologiques: Anne ne peut s'être trouvée לפני הוהו "devant YHWH", car une femme n'a pas accès au Saint des Saints; l'action de YHWH est souveraine, indépendante des souhaits humains; les Elides sont discrédités. De la même manière, tant 4QSam<sup>a</sup> que la *Vorlage* de la LXX ont corrigé le texte ici et là pour le rendre conforme aux prescriptions de la Torah. Cette première partie de l'ouvrage est d'excellente qualité, et elle servira sans doute de référence pour de nombreux travaux ultérieurs.

C'est sur la base de cette reconstitution du "meilleur texte ancien vraisemblable" que l'enquête se poursuit au niveau de la *Literarkritik* (deuxième partie, 153-188). Trois éléments du texte paraissent secondaires. La suite naturelle de 1,28 se trouve en 2,11 (en suivant la LXX), et le cantique d'Anne (2,1-10) fait ainsi figure d'addition. Il en va de même pour l'oracle de l'homme de Dieu (2,27-36), qui annonce la pérennité du sacerdoce sadocide, alors que le sacerdoce lévitique est relégué à des tâches inférieures. Quant au contexte historique, l'Auteur hésite entre celui de la réforme de Josias et des conflits postérieurs entre groupes sacerdotaux. Trois additions, enfin, parlent de Hophni et Pinchas, les prêtres fils d'Eli (1,3b), que YHWH a décidé de faire mourir (2,25bβ.34). Ce dernier élément est postérieur à l'oracle de l'homme de Dieu, qu'il surcharge; il est sans doute motivé lui aussi par la volonté de discréditer tout sacerdoce concurrent à celui qui officie à Jérusalem.

Revenons au cantique d'Anne (2,1-10). L'Auteur le tient pour une pièce homogène, les changements de rythme ou de personne (la confession monothéiste du v. 2aβ, en particulier) pouvant s'expliquer comme variations stylistiques destinée à éviter la monotonie; on peut cependant se demander si les Israélites de l'Antiquité étaient aussi sensibles que nous à la pesanteur d'un texte trop uniforme. D'autre part, Hutzli estime que le cantique a été composé en fonction du récit préexistant et s'appuie sur les points de contact qu'il décèle tant avec les chap. 1-2 qu'avec l'ensemble des livres de Samuel (160-161). Ici encore, il est permis d'être d'un avis différent. En effet, une seule expression est commune מפיכם ... יצא 1,23 selon 4QSam<sup>a</sup> et l'hébreu supposé par la LXX; 2,3); quant au motif de la femme stérile qui enfante sept fois (v. 5), il est peu approprié au contexte narratif, car Anne n'a encore enfanté qu'une seule fois, et elle n'aura au total que six enfants (1,21, si les "trois fils" s'ajoutent à



Samuel). Plusieurs motifs du cantique sont en porte-à-faux avec le récit: les “ennemis” (v. 1), les “guerriers” (v. 4), les “affamés” (v. 5), etc. Il faut envisager une autre solution: un rédacteur a repris un texte lyrique préexistant et l’a adapté à son nouveau contexte, d’où la reprise du motif de la bouche ouverte (1,23, puis 2,1b, avec un “tu” adressé à YHWH comme au v. 2aß, alors que le poème parle ailleurs de YHWH à la troisième personne). Il faudrait donc distinguer le cantique d’abord indépendant et son usage dans son nouveau contexte littéraire. Hutzli voit dans le poème une addition de l’époque hellénistique; plus exactement, il pourrait se rapporter au conflit des années 167-164, à cause des motifs de la corne (vv. 1.10), de l’orgueil de l’ennemi (v. 3), de la confession monothéiste (v. 2), des pauvres et des nobles (v. 8). Aucun de ces motifs, cependant, ne peut être considéré comme le monopole d’un contexte historique précis. Le thème central du cantique est celui du grand retournement de l’ordre social opéré par YHWH. Ce thème est développé avec des accents cosmiques dans les livres d’Amos (Am 4,13; 5,8; 9,5-6), de Job (5,2-5.9-16; 12,11-25) et d’Isaïe (41,18-20; 42,15-16; 44,27; 50,2-3); ces différents passages semblent avoir été écrits à l’époque perse. La clé est donnée au v. 9 TM, où le retournement des rapports de force concerne le חסיד et les רשעים c’est-à-dire en pratique ceux qui pratiquent la Torah et ceux qui la négligent (peut-être les gens liés à Samarie, qui ne fréquentent pas le Temple). Hutzli tient les vv. 8b-9a TM, qui manquent dans la LXX, pour une addition (interprétation théologique du poème), mais il semble que la phrase figurait dans 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, et le blanc de la LXX par un saut visuel opéré par le traducteur entre les deux כ du v. 8b et du v. 9b (cf. W. DIETRICH, *Samuel* (Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, VIII/1), fasc. 1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2003, p. 68).

La troisième partie de l’ouvrage (189-216) s’attache au récit de base de 1 S 1-2 pour en déterminer la forme littéraire, l’unité, les limites, l’architecture et les thèmes principaux. L’enquête est bien menée, et je ne puis que marquer mon accord sur l’essentiel des conclusions, et notamment sur le rapport du récit primitif avec les chap. 3 et 4: les différences de perspectives sont telles qu’il faut renoncer à y lire la suite naturelle de la narration primitive. Deux points me semblent mériter une réflexion ultérieure. Tout d’abord les notices sur les progrès de Samuel (1,24b; 2,11b.18.21b.26) obligent à se demander si le personnage principal du récit est Anne ou Samuel. Si ces notices ne sont pas des additions, quelle est leur fonction? Pour Hutzli, “elles montrent divers aspects de la croissance de Samuel de petit enfant à serviteur confirmé du temple” (193). Evidemment! Mais pourquoi souligner cette croissance, et pourquoi terminer le récit avec ce qui advient au fils, et non avec les sentiments de la mère? C’est ici qu’une deuxième réflexion s’impose: Samuel est promis à un important destin ultérieur. Par ailleurs, 1 S 2,22-26 ne forme pas une

bonne finale au récit: ces versets n'offrent aucune correspondance avec la situation de départ (stérilité d'Anne); surtout la situation décrite (Eli est très âgé, ses fils se conduisent mal, mais Samuel trouve grâce auprès de YHWH comme auprès des hommes) ouvre la question du leadership religieux futur sur Israël. Au-delà des chap. 3 et 4, le récit de la naissance appelle une suite! Où la trouver? La longueur du texte suggère qu'il doit s'agir d'une narration d'une importance exceptionnelle, sans doute les origines de la royauté israélite. C'est Samuel, en effet, qui donnera l'onction royale d'abord à Saül (10,1), puis à David (16,13). Celui qui allait oindre les deux premiers rois au nom de YHWH ne pouvait pas être né "comme tout le monde"!

L'origine historique du récit de la naissance de Samuel fait l'objet de la quatrième partie du livre (217-265). L'auteur considère la narration comme enracinée dans une tradition orale, mais à mes yeux ni les caractéristiques stylistiques (phrases courtes, parataxe...) ni l'absence de réflexion théologique développée ne peuvent constituer des indices probants; l'auteur du récit a pu s'inspirer des récits de naissances d'Isaac (stérilité de Sara, rivalité avec Agar, Gn 16-21\*) et de Jacob (stérilité de Rebecca, Gn 25,21). Hutzli s'interroge ensuite sur le lien de 1 S 1-2 avec la suite des livres de Samuel et avec les livres des Rois. A vrai dire, autant il était précis dans son enquête de critique textuelle, autant ici il manie les grandes théories sur des ensembles littéraires immenses, sans en maîtriser les tenants et aboutissants. Il postule un "livre des Rois proto-deutéronomiste" rédigé par les scribes de Josias afin d'appuyer sa réforme centralisatrice du culte. Les livres de Samuel n'ont pas pu faire partie de cet ouvrage, car ils parlent sans les condamner de plusieurs sanctuaires de province; de plus, ils montrent les faiblesses de David, alors que, dans les livres des Rois, celui-ci représente l'idéal de la royauté, et les sommaires des règnes ne comportent pas d'évaluation religieuse. Dans leur teneur primitive, les deux livres de Samuel ont été écrits comme réponse au Deutéronome et au livre des Rois primitifs; opposé à une réforme qui fait bon marché de la diversité des traditions israélites, l'auteur – peut-être un prêtre d'un sanctuaire désaffecté – aurait eu à cœur de rappeler les cultes locaux et la mémoire des tribus du Nord, et en particulier le règne de Saül. Cette hypothèse se heurte à diverses objections auxquelles Hutzli ne répond pas. Le premier livre de Samuel donne de Saül une image négative: après son succès initial à Yabesh de Galaad et son acclamation comme roi à Gilgal, il va d'échec en échec jusqu'à sa mort pitoyable à Gelboé. En fait, l'histoire de Saül est racontée d'un point de vue judéen, pour montrer la légitimité du règne de David sur les tribus du Nord. Je ne vois pas bien non plus en quoi l'histoire de la révolte d'Absalom peut servir la cause que Hutzli prête à l'auteur des livres de Samuel. On peut aussi se demander quelle autorité pouvait revêtir une œuvre littéraire qui

contestait la politique royale. Hutzli concèdera d'ailleurs (268) qu'il n'a pu répondre à une série de questions sur la teneur primitive de son *israelitische Erzählwerk*, sur celle du "livre des Rois proto-deutéronomiste", sur les circonstances et l'auteur de la fusion entre les deux ouvrages, ainsi que sur les liens possibles entre cette histoire littéraire et celle d'autres livres bibliques, dont le Tétrateuque.

La cinquième et dernière partie de l'ouvrage (267-272) fait office de conclusion. En six pages, l'auteur retrace toute la *Redaktionsgeschichte* de 1 S 1-2. L'essentiel du récit a été écrit au temps de Josias comme prologue à un ouvrage destiné à combattre la propagande soutenant la centralisation du culte. Ce récit a été complété successivement par l'oracle de l'homme de Dieu, par quelques remarques sur les fils d'Eli et par le cantique d'Anne. Ce récit nous est enfin parvenu par l'intermédiaire de trois témoins qui en ont chacun modifié quelques éléments: le TM, 4QSam<sup>a</sup> et la *Vorlage* de la LXX.

Au-delà des remarques critiques exposées ci-dessus, l'enquête de Hutzli revêt des qualités indéniables: clarté de l'exposé, progression logique, argumentation sobre en dialogue constant avec d'autres positions, bonne connaissance de dossiers complexes. Si les hypothèses qu'il développe ensuite me semblent discutables, sa première partie, en particulier, ne pourra être ignorée par ceux qui, après lui, étudieront le début des livres de Samuel.

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### Novum Testamentum

Joseph R. DODSON, *The 'Powers' of Personification. Rhetorical Purpose in the 'Book of Wisdom' and the Letter to the Romans* (BZNW 161), Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, xii-264 p. 16 × 23,5.

The use and purposes of personification in the Wisdom of Solomon and Romans are examined and compared in J. Dodson's fine monograph, the published version of his doctoral dissertation defended at the University of Aberdeen under the direction of Simon Gathercole. In his introduction (1-26), Dodson reviews the history of research, noting how various scholars have compared other aspects of Wisdom and Romans (e.g., Francis Watson among the most recent), or have studied individual personifications in these two books, generally focusing on the *nature* of the personification either as a rhetorical device or as a cosmological power (e.g., the Bultmann – Käsemann debate). By contrast, the original contributions which Dodson makes are to consider all the (main) personifications in these books individually, discussing their *purposes* in relation to the overall use of personification in each book, and then to compare the contexts and purposes of the personifications in the two books. While Dodson admits the "possible dependency" of Romans on Wisdom (3), his approach focuses instead on a "heuristic comparison" (25) by which the study of personifications in one book illuminates the personifications in the other.

The body of Dodson's study is divided into four sections, each consisting of several short chapters. The first section reviews the definition and purposes of personification (chapters 1-2; 27-50). The second and third sections respectively cover the personifications found in the Book of Wisdom (chapters 3-7; 51-118) and the Letter to the Romans (chapters 8-11; 119-181); in these two sections, Dodson discusses the pertinent passages, providing also the Greek text and his own English translation in parallel columns. The fourth section compares the personifications common to the two books and discusses their common contexts and purposes (chapters 12-14; 182-222). The end matter consists of a well-researched bibliography (including works in English, German, French, and Italian) and indexes of ancient sources and subjects (but no index of authors). Overall, the work is well-written and clear in its exposition, although more editing could have avoided some errors and omissions: for example, section headings in the Table of Contents and in the body of the text do not always match; several names of scholars are incorrect (e.g., "Paul" Beauchamp, not "Pierre"); bibliographical entries often lack subtitles and names of series; Greek accents at times pose a challenge (92).

In the first section, Dodson's discusses rhetorical style (*elocutio*) (29, n. 17), under which fall related terms such as metaphor, personification, and *prosopopoiia*. He defines personification as "[t]he attribution of human traits to an inanimate object, abstract idea or impersonal being which is used with action verbs most commonly employed to describe the action of a person ..." (40). Surveying ancient and modern theories, he also reviews the possible purposes of personification: "to decorate or amplify, to educate or clarify, to motivate or manipulate, to expose the cause or to deflect attention away from ..." (49-50). Of course, given an example of personification, it is important to identify precisely *what* it is that is being decorated, clarified, manipulated, etc., and *how/where* the personification fits into the overall arrangement of a text. In this regard, it would be helpful to expand Dodson's discussion to include two other aspects of rhetoric, namely, *inventio* and *dispositio* (29, n. 17), and then to include a brief examination of these other aspects in the following sections on Wisdom and Romans, so as to aid in grasping the arguments (contexts) in which the personifications are found.

In the chapters of section II, Dodson explores the personifications in the Book of Wisdom: Death (Wis 1,12-16; 2,23-24); Creation/Cosmos (Wis 5,20-23; 16,15-29; 19,6-10.18-22); Logos (Wis 18,14-16); Wrath (and its synonyms) (Wis 16,1-12; 18,20-25); and Wisdom-Sophia (and other related terms like Spirit) (Wis 1,3-9; 4,1-2; and a survey of Wis 6-11). Dodson does an admirable job of first providing an overview of all these personifications and texts, and then of synthesizing the material, explaining how the various personifications are associated with each other (Sophia, Spirit, Logos, and Creation in juxtaposition to Death and Wrath). In keeping with the purposes of Wisdom (Wis 1,1; 19,22) (53), he also explains that these personifications are generally used in contexts of "soteriology and theodicy" (117), motivating the readers to seek righteousness, strengthening them in the face of persecution by reminding them of "God's past deliverance of the righteous" (118), and distancing "God from the origin and work of evil" (118). Since Dodson's goal is to discuss the relevant texts for all the personifications, he often cannot cover the texts in great detail, thus leaving plenty of opportunities for future research. For example, the recent article by R.J. Morales, "The Spirit, the Righteous Sufferer, and the Mysteries of God: Echoes of Wisdom in 1 Corinthians?", *BZ* 54 (2010) 54-72, further explores (independently of Dodson's work) the relationship between the personifications of Wisdom and Spirit in the Book of Wisdom, similarly in view of the purpose of delivering the righteous from suffering and in comparison with a Pauline letter.

Dodson's attention turns to Romans in section III, studying the following personifications: Sin and Death (Rom 5,12-21; 6,9.12-23; 7,7-25); Law (Rom 3,19-20; 5,20; 7,1-6); Grace and Righteousness

(Rom 5,20b-21; 6,18-20; 10,5-8); Creation and Spirit (Rom 8,18-23; 8,26-27; cf. Gal 6,14-15). In particular, Dodson makes a contribution by contrasting Paul's personification of Creation to similar personifications in the Old Testament, in Second Temple Jewish literature (Philo), and the Roman imperial cult. One of the difficulties in this section, however, is that on account of Dodson's near-exclusive focus on verses that contain personifications, at times he pays little attention to other relevant verses in the passages he treats. For example, in his treatment of Death in Rom 5-6 (125-130), he indicates (129-130, 146) but does not develop the contrast between participation in Death and participation in the Death of Christ, making no mention of verses that speak of Christ's death (Rom 5,10; 6,3.4.5) (see M. Quesnel, "La figure de la mort dans l'épître aux Romains: Fonction rhétorique et argumentative", *The Letter to the Romans* [ed. U. Schnelle] [BETL 226; Leuven 2009] 55-73). He also does not devote sufficient attention to other important rhetorical figures used by Paul in conjunction with personification: e.g., the *synkrisis* or comparison between Adam and Christ in Rom 5,12-21 (indicated on 126); the *prosopopoiia* (speech-in-character) in Rom 7,7-25 (mentioned on 121); and the *antanaclasis* (the trope in which the same word is used with different meanings) in Rom 7,21-23 regarding the word "law" (cf. 134), such that the passage not only distances the Law from Sin (as Dodson says), but also forces the reader "not to absolutize any single referent" of law (J.-N. Aletti, "Romans 7,7-25: Rhetorical Criticism and its Usefulness", *SEÁ* 60 [1996] 87). Similarly, as already mentioned, in order to grasp better the rhetorical purposes of personification, his work could be expanded to consider more carefully Paul's argument in Rom 5-8 and its arrangement (*inventio* and *dispositio*); i.e., what are the theses Paul is trying to prove in these chapters and what proofs does he use? Otherwise, there could be a risk of falling into "reductionism of thought or function" (25), about which Dodson rightly cautions.

In the fourth section, Dodson compares the personifications of Evil/Death and of Creation in Wisdom and Romans. Despite the differences, he finds a "common thread" (202) in that the authors of Wisdom and Romans use personification mainly "in contexts dealing with theodicy" (202), specifically regarding three problems: the origin of sin and death, the difficulties regarding God's dealings with Israel, and the suffering of the righteous. Concerning the second of these problems (Israel's sin and God's response), Dodson holds that in both Wisdom and Romans the personifications serve to distance God from evil: in Wisdom, regarding events where Israel is punished by God, and in Romans, where Law is personified to distance it from God's saving work. Interestingly, a recent article by John Barclay — J.M.G. BARCLAY, "Unnerving Grace: Approaching Romans 9-11 from The Wisdom of Solomon", *Between*

*Gospel and Election*. Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11 (eds. F. WILK – J.R. WAGNER) (WUNT 257; Tübingen 2010) 91-109 — emphasizes instead that, despite the parallels, there is a crucial difference. Focusing on Rom 9, Barclay comments that, rather than distancing God from evil, Paul at times makes him appear morally questionable, especially in view of the citation of Mal 1,2-3 in Rom 9,13 (“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated”): “That God should hate his creatures is precisely what Wisdom insisted it was impossible for God to do” (Barclay, “Unnerving Grace”, 106). Paul thus invites the objection that God is unjust (9,14), which he immediately denies and then proceeds to explain. Curiously, Paul’s explanation even uses personification to express what the thing molded says to the molder (Rom 9,20b; cf. Wis 15,7) (or *prosopopoiia* if considering that the thing molded represents a person: Rom 9,20a). Since the objective is to show that God is not unjust, Dodson’s conclusion still seems to apply: “the Powers of Personification march into texts which concern the paradox of evil in order to exonerate God...” (222). However, the case is slightly more complicated because Paul is here also trying to explain the principle of divine election (Rom 9,6b.11). This example serves to highlight once again the importance of inserting the study of a rhetorical trope such as personification within a broader study of Paul’s argumentation, especially of the theses (*propositiones*) which he seeks to demonstrate by means of different kinds of arguments/proofs, utilizing various rhetorical figures and tropes. The purpose of a trope such as personification thus depends, to some extent at least, on the point Paul is trying to make in the argument in which the trope is found.

These observations are not meant to detract from the value of Dodson’s monograph, but are rather an indication of the further work that can be done. Indeed, the path to this future research has been opened up by Dodson’s intriguing and fruitful study.

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François BOVON, *L'évangile selon saint Luc (19, 28 – 24, 53)* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament IIId). Genève. Labor et Fides, 2009. 557 p. 17,5 × 23,5. €58

The publication of this fourth and final volume brings to a happy conclusion a monumental project that began over forty years ago, when Bovon first took on the task of presenting in a full-scale commentary the assembled results of his determined resolve to study the Gospel of Luke “with the sober reserve of a scholar and with the confidence of a be-

liever" (Vol. 1, Preface, xiii). The success of B.'s efforts to advance our understanding of the third Evangelist's intended message has already been acknowledged, with admiration and gratitude, in published reviews of the first three volumes, which appeared in German (EKKNT 3.1-3) and in French (CNT IIIa-c) in 1989/1991, 1996, and 2001, respectively. The same qualities that reviewers found so praiseworthy in the earlier volumes are found undiminished in this final installment: a careful attention to grammatical and stylistic details, a judicious exposition of the literary features of the text, and discussions of the historical and theological issues that are admirably balanced and always well informed by a wide-ranging knowledge of both the ancient sources and modern scholarship. Equally consistent in this final volume is the manner in which B.'s explanatory comments are arranged. The text is divided into twenty-six discrete pericopes. For each passage, B. provides the following: an annotated translation; an extensive bibliography; an exegetical treatment of the passage that moves from a general analysis of its literary form and its tradition-historical development to a detailed discussion of key terms, grammatical usages, and historical references; a summary of how the passage has been interpreted by later Christian authors; and a brief conclusion that comments on the significance of the passage for modern readers. The volume also features an updated bibliography of recent monographs and articles on Luke-Acts, along with a list of general works on the Lucan Passion Narrative. Also included are the three indices compiled by Fanny Mossière, which reference, for all four volumes of the commentary, the citations from Luke and Acts, Greek words and expressions, and the key thematic topics.

As was the case in the earlier volumes, B. never deviates from what he considers the essential goal of his exegetical project: to elucidate Luke's understanding of the gospel tradition by means of a careful study of the ways in which he purposefully reshaped the language and literary form of his sources. The redaction-critical method consistently employed by B. throughout the commentary places him at odds with a growing number of commentators who have argued that the surest indications of the author's interests and convictions are found not in his redaction of reputed sources but in the suggestive patterns that come into view from a study of the author's literary skill in composing individual scenes and in arranging these episodes within a meaningful narrative sequence. These and similar objections, which in the last two decades have tipped the scales in favor of a more "synchronic" approach to gospel study, have done little to shake B.'s confidence in the validity and importance of redaction criticism. On the other hand, it is possible to find in this final volume of the commentary certain indications of B.'s willingness to play closer attention to intratextual issues, and especially to those larger units



of the narrative within which individual episodes are intended to function as parts within a meaningful whole. A good example may be found in B.'s discussion of how Luke's account of Jesus' trial is organized. While retaining the traditional disposition of the various trial scenes, B. also adds new insights that reflect his attentiveness to the dynamic of the unfolding narrative, which recounts, in successive stages, Jesus' culminating engagement with three different groups: his disciples (Luke 22,7-46), his community of origins (Luke 22,47-71), and the ruling power in the figure of Pilate (Luke 23,1-25). A further example may be found in the "analyse synchronique" of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22,39-46), in which B. brings to light the linguistic and thematic parallels that link this scene, where Jesus readies himself for the ordeal of his passion, with the earlier account of Jesus' temptations in the desert (Luke 4,1-13), which records an analogous preparation for the public ministry that follows.

In his diachronic analysis of the text, B. insists that Luke's manner of editing material taken from the Gospel of Mark reveals an attitude of deep respect for the sources he used. As can be seen most clearly in earlier sections of the Gospel, Luke, unlike Matthew, preferred to incorporate large sections of Mark and to preserve, with very few exceptions, the sequential order of the episodes. While small excerpts of extra tradition were sometimes inserted into a Marcan episode for clarification, the more common practice of interpolating large blocks of non-Markan material (e.g., Luke 6,20-8,3; 9,51-18,14) reveals Luke's tendency to follow one source at a time and to avoid conflation and sequential rearrangements as much as possible. With regard to the sources Luke used in composing the Passion Narrative, B. adopts a position that is fully consistent with his understanding of Luke's profound conservatism. The source-critical theory presupposed in this section of the commentary is worked out and defended in an article B. published in 1993: "Le récit lucanien de la Passion de Jésus (Lc 22-23)", in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (éd. C. Focant; BETHL 110; Leuven 1993) 393-423. Against the opinion of many redaction critics, B. maintains that Luke's reliance on a non-Markan account of Jesus' passion must be presupposed in order to account for the many instances in which the wording, content, and sequential order of Luke's version diverge sharply from the Marcan prototype. The several parallels that link the Lucan and Johannine accounts of Jesus' passion, according to B., speak in favor of this hypothetical source. In composing the Passion Narrative, then, Luke only continued his practice of following one source at a time, and in this case alternated between Mark and another, independent version ("L"): Luke 22,1-14 (Mark); 22,15-46 (L); 22,47-23,5 (Mark); 23,6-43 (L); 23,44-56 (Mark); 24,1-11 (Mark); 24,12-53 (L). B. himself admits that this proposal is "aventureuse," since it is often difficult to determine which of

these two sources stands behind a Lucan passage. In Luke's account of Jesus' appearance before the Sanhedrin (22,66-71), for example, the differences from Mark's version in form, content, and context are considerable, but in this instance B. judges that the evidence does not require the positing of an independent source, especially since the scene is found within a larger section ostensibly derived from Mark. As the criteria used in making this and like judgments are not clearly stated, not all readers will share B.'s confidence in the conclusions reached by his redaction-critical analysis. While always leaving space in the discussion for contrasting opinions, B. is intent on practicing, with precision and vigor, the chosen exegetical methods and shows little interest in convincing those who harbor doubts about the possibility of validly reconstructing the history of the gospel tradition on the basis of stylistic and form-critical considerations.

B. will continue to win the special gratitude of readers for the treasure trove of useful information included in his skillful elucidation of many philological details, which have given rise to many diverse interpretations. With the confidence of a learned scholar and teacher, B. presents the several possibilities without prejudice. A preferred interpretation is advanced only when he considers the evidence to be sufficiently decisive. Additionally, the several vexing text-critical problems found in Luke 22-23 are given careful attention. In general, B. tends to support the authenticity of most of the disputed verses (Luke 22,19b-20; 22,43-44; 23,34a; 24,6 [long form]; and 24,12), and the arguments he presents in support of his position are unfailingly well-informed, balanced, and unbiased. Equally praiseworthy is the diligence applied in compiling a history of interpretation for each of the pericopes. Reviewers of the preceding volumes have not failed to point out the selective nature of these summaries, which in certain cases include comments on a gospel episode in general and not on Luke's particular version of the event. Setting aside these largely unavoidable limitations, readers will surely profit from the instructive value of B.'s efforts to trace a line of coherent development within a wide plurality of interpretative conclusions and applications.

The careful and meticulous exegesis of the text in its many dimensions provides the basis for B.'s reaffirmation of a more traditional understanding of the theological message conveyed in Luke's Passion Narrative. In sharp contrast with recent attempts to rehabilitate an interpretation once advanced by Martin Dibelius and later by Hans Conzelmann, B. contends that Luke does, indeed, ascribe great redemptive significance to the passion and death of Jesus. While acknowledging the paraenetic interests reflected in Luke's portrayal of Jesus' composure and courage in the face of death, B. sharply refutes the claim that Luke intended to present Jesus as a heroic martyr, comparable to other virtuous Greek philosophers, such

as Socrates. In B.'s judgment, more reliable indications of the intended message are found in the various ways in which Luke affirms and elaborates the traditional understanding of Jesus' death as a redemptive event: the repeated allusions to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (e.g., the citation of Isa 53,12 in Luke 22,37); the expanded account of the Last Supper in which Jesus explicitly interprets his death as a saving event that his disciples are to actualize through ritual anamnesis (Luke 22,19-20); and the dramatization of the redemptive effects of Jesus' death in the tearing of the temple veil (Luke 23,45) and in the reactions of the witnesses (Luke 23,47-48). To the attentive and discerning reader, according to B., Luke's Passion Narrative presents not the sad recollection of a tragic event later overturned by God but rather the confident proclamation of God's redemptive plan fully realized in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Surely not all scholars will agree with the theological conclusions defended in this study. And some will continue to regret B.'s decision to remain within the confines of classical redaction criticism. But all students of Luke's Gospel, for many generations to come, will profit greatly from this magisterial commentary, in which the results of Lucan scholarship, old and new, are carefully compiled, wisely considered, and judiciously assessed.

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LOVE L. SECHREST, *A Former Jew. Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (LNTS 410), London, T&T Clark, 2009, xiii-262

L'Autrice di questo volume è dal 2006 Professore Assistente di Nuovo Testamento al Fuller Theological Seminary della Chiesa Evangelica in Pasadena (California). Il suo è uno studio sicuramente interessante e importante, oltre che originale, al fine di rendersi conto di quale fosse la convinzione di Paolo circa l'identità sua personale e più in generale quella della comunità cristiana in rapporto alla matrice giudaica.

La tesi centrale dello studio è presto detta. Essa consiste nel sostenere che Paolo si considerava come uno che era nato Giudeo ma che poi con la sua adesione alla fede cristiana era diventato membro di una nuova e diversa "razza". Analogamente questo valeva per ogni singolo cristiano, sia che questi provenisse dal giudaismo o dal gentilesimo; altrettanto si deve dire in generale dell'intera chiesa che perciò rappresenta qualcosa di originale nei confronti sia di Israele sia dell'ambiente greco-romano. In questo modo si riprende di fatto l'antica definizione dei cristiani come

*tertium genus* che leggiamo già nell'apocrifa *Predicazione di Pietro* (in Clemente Al., *Stromati* 6,5,41) e poi nella *Apologia* di Aristide, nella *Lettera a Diogneto*, e nel *Martirio di Policarpo*. Si comprende subito che la posta in gioco consiste nel concetto di "razza", il quale nell'antichità veniva percepito come qualcosa di diverso rispetto alla nostra moderna precomprensione.

Per cominciare, la Sechrest dedica alcune pagine (1-53) allo *status quaestionis* della ricerca contemporanea, prendendo in considerazione soprattutto gli studi di Daniel Boyarin (secondo cui Paolo sarebbe un "supersessionist" che non lascia spazio alle differenze etniche), di Brad Braxton (secondo cui al contrario l'argomentazione della lettera ai Galati vuole mantenere le particolarità etniche tra i cristiani), e di Caroline Johnson Hodge (secondo cui i Gentili in Cristo formerebbero, sì, una discendenza abrahamitica, ma subordinata a Israele e alla discendenza giudaica). Questi Autori di fatto assumono come punto di partenza l'idea moderna di una affinità razziale consistente in una comune medesima discendenza fisica. Non per nulla il presente studio si dimostra ripetutamente sensibile alla questione razziale quale essa si pone all'interno degli Stati Uniti d'America.

La nostra Autrice inizia il suo studio specifico (pp. 54-109) con l'analizzare i concetti affini di γένος e di ἔθνος per stabilire quale fosse il loro significato nel mondo antico. Bisogna riconoscere che l'analisi condotta è molto minuta e dettagliata, poiché prende in considerazione addirittura alcune migliaia di testi da entrambi i versanti non-giudaico e giudaico. Il risultato è duplice. L'uno, di tipo semplicemente lessicale, identifica più specificamente il γένος nel senso di "race" e lo ἔθνος nel senso di "ethnicity" ad un livello sinonimico, precisando semmai che il primo appare spesso come un sottotipo del secondo. Entrambi comunque appaiono in una dozzina di contesti diversi, cioè sostanzialmente in rapporto a gruppi, guerre e conflitti, territorio, governo, costumi o stile di vita, religione, lingua, parentela, genere umano, e fondatori di un raggruppamento. L'altro risultato, più importante ai fini della ricerca, è di carattere semantico e consiste nel rilevare che esiste una differenza tra la nostra odierna comprensione delle cose rispetto e quella antica. In concreto, mentre la nostra concezione corrisponde più o meno a quella greco-romana nel senso di una comune appartenenza fissa a una discendenza, a un paese, a una medesima lingua e a costumi culturali uguali, invece per la comprensione della propria identità da parte del giudaismo il fattore più importante era quello della religione, stante il fatto, per esempio, che i Giudei della diaspora si autodefiniscono tali a dispetto della mancanza di uno specifico territorio patrio e anche di una lingua comune. Questo resta vero anche se Flavio Giuseppe, a motivo della sua collocazione culturale, insiste piuttosto sul dato della consanguineità. La

conseguenza più significativa è che, secondo la comune concezione del giudaismo del tempo, è la conversione religiosa a implicare un cambiamento di razza o di etnia. Ciò risulta piuttosto chiaro in Filone Al., secondo cui l'obbedienza alla Legge è più importante della parentela fisico-nazionale (cf. *Spec.leg.* 1,51-52.317-318; *Virt.* 103-104; *C.Ap.* 2,210). In sostanza, dunque, "religion, via Torah, was the central criterion by which the Jewish community defined its identity as an ethno-racial entity" (108).

Ciò chiarito, la Sechrest passa a esaminare "the racial character" di Paolo e delle comunità paoline (pp. 111-206) e studia soprattutto tre passi paolini che fanno particolarmente al caso in questione: Rom 4,1-25; 1 Cor 10,2; Filem 1.15-16. Ad essi si aggiungono poi Rom 2,17-29; 11,13-14; 1 Cor 9,10-23; 10,32; Gal 1,15-24; 3,22-29; Fil 3,2-9. Le conclusioni sono multiformi: anzitutto Abramo è realmente l'antenato sia dei credenti Giudei sia dei credenti Gentili, avendo anche un secondo gruppo di discendenti che sono i Giudei non-credenti; inoltre, se il criterio di appartenenza alla comunità dei discendenti da Abramo è ormai la fede, ciò va inteso nel senso realistico della costituzione della comunità cristiana in termini di una famiglia in quanto Dio sa creare il reale dal non-reale; in più, Paolo vede la storia di Israele come condivisa non solo dai cristiani di origine giudaica ma anche da quelli di origine gentile; infine, la parentela fisica può rafforzare i legami della parentela cristiana. Quanto alla sua personale identità giudaica, Paolo si definisce Giudeo solo quando parla della sua nascita (cf. Gal 1,13-14; Fil 3,5, 2 Cor 11,22), ma si distanzia dall'autoidentificazione giudaica quando dice di diventare come un Giudeo a motivo dell'evangelo (1 Cor 9,29-20), oltre a parlare abitualmente dei Giudei alla terza persona. Sicchè, "he thinks of himself as someone who was born a Jew but no longer considers himself one" (159).

Proseguendo, l'Autrice dedica le ultime pagine alla dialettica delle relazioni di razza in Cristo, chiedendosi quale sia lo specifico della nuova razza e come esso funzioni in rapporto ai diversi gruppi cristiani. Richiamandosi soprattutto a Gal 2,15-17; 6,16 (intendendo l'"Israele di Dio" come includente i cristiani di origine gentile), e adottando la distinzione tra "membership criteria" e "membership indicia", la Sechrest afferma con chiarezza che il criterio determinante per essere membri della nuova razza è la fede in Cristo, mentre lo Spirito è l'indizio-chiave che connota la partecipazione di un membro alla comunità cristiana. La triade dell'identità giudaica, consistente nella giustificazione per Legge, nella discendenza da Abramo, e nella circoncisione, viene messa in opposizione alla triade dell'identità cristiana, consistente nella giustificazione per fede, nell'essere in Cristo, e nel dono dello Spirito.

Nelle pagine conclusive (207-231, a cui seguono un'Appendice in forma di diagramma e la Bibliografia, prima dell'Indice delle Fonti e degli Autori), si riprende la critica ai tre Autori menzionati all'inizio e si afferma in termini di attualizzazione che non si possono formare delle chiese separate in base al colore della pelle o comunque alla semplice nascita, poiché l'identità cristiana è quella di una nuova creazione in Cristo.

Un giudizio su questa monografia non può che essere bilanciato. È paradossale che nello stesso anno 2009 a San Francisco sia apparso lo studio di un'altra Autrice, *Paul Was Not a Christian. The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*, di Pamela Eisenbaum (una ebrea che è Professore Assistente di Biblical Studies and Christian Origins alla Iliff School of Theology, che è un istituto accademico cristiano-battista di Denver), la quale sostiene la tesi esattamente opposta a quella della Sechrest; essa però, non solo fa valere una chiara precomprensione giudaica (al modo di Boyarin), ma non compie un vero esame sulle fonti letterarie del mondo antico al fine di definire l'idea di genere/razza/etnicità, come invece fa la Sechrest.

Tuttavia, è come se nell'indagine della nostra Autrice ci fosse qualcosa di insufficiente. Mi riferisco in particolare all'affermazione di Paolo in Gal 2,15, dove egli rivolgendosi a Pietro si accomuna a lui col dire che "noi siamo per natura Giudei" (ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι). La Sechrest tratta questo testo un po' velocemente alle pp. 150-151, 169, 189, e sostiene che la frase in realtà si riferisce alla nascita e quindi al passato dei due apostoli, i quali invece, come suggerisce il successivo v. 16, hanno un presente che è ormai connotato dalla giustificazione per fede in Cristo. Ma è come se in questa analisi mancasse qualcosa, e cioè si deprezzasse la dimensione di giudaicità che comunque accompagna e connota costitutivamente l'identità di un Giudeo credente in Cristo. In effetti, il complemento φύσει altrove implica appunto qualcosa di costitutivo e irrinunciabile, come in Rom 2,14 (sulla legge naturale) e in Gal 4,4 (sugli dèi che "per natura" non sono tali), mentre semmai un superamento di questa "natura" è chiaramente espresso in Ef 2,3 ma con la precisazione del passato ("eravamo per natura figli dell'ira") che invece in Gal 2,15 manca. D'altronde, l'Autrice omette di fare una spiegazione più dettagliata dell'affermazione di Gal 3,28, secondo cui "non c'è né Giudeo né Greco ... ma siete uno solo in Cristo Gesù", poiché non basta rimproverare a Boyarin che egli intende la frase nel senso di "sameness" invece che di "oneness" (213). Probabilmente la posizione dell'Autrice si dovrebbe sfumare di più, riconoscendo che in Cristo ogni credente porta con sé la propria identità culturale ma senza farla prevaricare sul compagno di fede, così da evitare in ogni caso le trappole del razzismo e dell'antisemitismo.

In buona sostanza, quindi, ritengo che lo studio della Sechrest sia sicuramente fondamentale e comunque preferibile alla tesi difesa dalla Eisenbaum. Soprattutto essa chiarifica il linguaggio da impiegare nella trattazione del Paolo storico, stimolandoci a tenere conto delle diverse concezioni del suo tempo rispetto alle nostre in materia di “race/ethnicity”.

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